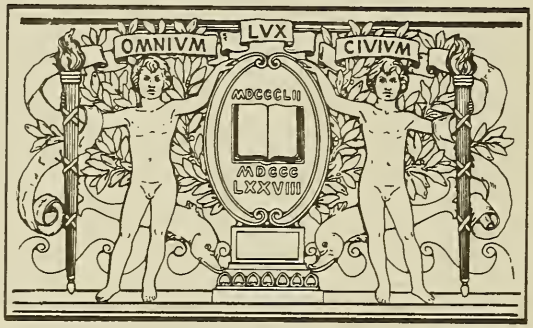
# THE TOWER

MARY
TAPPAN
WRIGHT

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# THE TOWER

BOOKS BY MARY TAPPAN WRIGHT

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# THE TOWER

## *A NOVEL*

BY

MARY TAPPAN WRIGHT

*"The myrtle and the rose, the rose,*
*The sunshine and the swallow,*
*The dream that comes, the wish that goes,*
*The memories that follow!"*

NEW YORK
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TO

THE OLD FRIENDS IN SHELBURNE

AND

THE NEW ONES IN CASTINE

# THE TOWER

## CHAPTER I

MISS LANGDON stood at her upper window looking out upon the Deanery garden. It was a secluded place, shut off from the surrounding college park by high hedges of glossy laurel willow; a spreading oak-tree threw a tender shade on its smooth green turf; the shrubbery was all in bloom, and the borders were gay with tulips and hyacinths, while a bed of lingering daffodils still made a sunny spot in one corner. Miss Langdon closed her eyes; tears were smarting against the inner edge of her eyelids. All this youth and spring; these soft light breezes, the scent of the hyacinths, the satisfied yellow of the daffodils—how enragingly they hurt!

"Shall I take your things down on the south porch, Miss?" said the maid.

"I shall not go out this morning, Josephine; the wind is east."

Josephine glanced discreetly over her mistress's

shoulder up to where the vanes on the Tower of Bent Hall were pointing southwest. "It is very warm, Miss Sylvia," she ventured.

"There is certainly a breath of east in the air! I often feel it before the weather-vanes have turned. You may draw the lounge to the window."

Josephine pushed forward the lounge and Miss Langdon sank down upon it, letting her long, white silk gown settle in a drift upon the floor. Her slender hands were half-hidden in the full ruffles at her wrists, and her spirited, well-shaped head of snowy hair rose from the gathered laces about her neck with the alert air of courteous attention for which she was famous.

"Is there anything more, Miss Sylvia?" asked Josephine.

"Yes, bring me the field-glasses before you go."

Josephine put the glasses down on a table near the head of the lounge; but Miss Langdon did not take them; her eyes were turned drearily toward the Tower, which rose just outside the garden. They were blue eyes, deep and clear, with long black eyelashes. The fine, candid arch of her dark eyebrows—interrupted, now, by the faintest pathetic wrinkle—her smooth, unlined forehead beneath the thick waves of soft curling white hair, her clean-cut features and the exquisite coloring of her complexion were all so unquestionably beauti-

ful that, in spite of her changed hair and her thirty-eight well-authenticated years, no one ever thought of her but as a young woman.

Far above the foliage of the early spring the Tower soared this morning, as if rejoicing, its many vanes and gargoyles sharply detached against the sky. Miss Langdon knew them all in each line and detail; she had watched the Tower through every time and season. The birds she loved circled through its arches; doves nested somewhere near its top; clouds drifted behind it in fleecy masses; rains beat upon it; snows clothed it; the sun flushed it with amethyst in the early dawn, and gilded it yellow with gold in the late afternoon; in short, it stood, in her life, for one thing permanent amid much that changed. For, as the motherless daughter of the Bishop of the diocese—who was, at the same time, President of Great Dulwich College—she had seen her little world of men, and women, and boys in perpetual fluctuation ever since, at the end of her school days, she had taken the head of her father's household. She had become weary of farewells, and her heart had begun to harden itself, protectively, against them. The Tower had become her only confidant, her closest friend; she loved it, jealously, secretly, resentful alike of student or tourist who climbed its many steps for the sake of the view. The empty arches of the open space beneath the pointed roof were

sacred to a shadowy memory of long ago; all other presences were desecration.

Turning to the table she took up the field-glasses and hastily levelled them at the wide windows of the Tower rooms, below the arches. Surely there was some one moving inside! A woman in a mob cap came to the window and shook out a duster in the air. It was an intrusion, an unendurable intrusion!

She swept her glass upward and was startled to find herself gazing into the face of a man who was leaning with his elbows on the stone balustrade, looking out over the garden and smoking tranquilly, as if he had a right to be there! There was something familiar in the poise of his head; his hand moved out slowly and she knew that he had flicked the ash from the tip of his cigar with his little finger. The color rushed to Miss Langdon's cheeks; she could not have seen at that distance; how was it, then, that she had been able to divine the exact turn of the hand, the quick motion of the finger, every detail that must have accompanied the vague movement which had caught her eye through the glass? "Who can he be?" she murmured. "He doesn't look young; it is not possible that some one is going to take the rooms again?"

She was so painfully occupied with her own thoughts that she had not noticed that the door

had opened and that her father had crossed the room and was standing behind her.

"Good-morning," he said cheerfully. "Ah, ha! So he has begun to move in already?"

"Who?" Her throat was dry; the word came in a whisper.

"Robinson. Surely you remember Robinson!"

Remember him!

"He is going to teach Moncrieff's courses in literature for the remainder of this term," the Bishop went on, craning his neck to see the Tower. "It was decided in such a hurry that I must have forgotten to mention it. He came in this morning to know whether he might have his old rooms again. I told him that he would find those stairs a little more difficult to climb than they were twenty years ago, but he said that he'd already tried them and had been surprised to find them so easy."

"He graduated eighteen years ago," murmured Miss Langdon.

"Then you do remember him? He made something of a mark in his college course; it is a pity that he has chosen to waste his time since then drifting about Europe in the way he has! Eighteen years is a large slice out of a man's life, a large slice, indeed!"

"You forget; he was an instructor at Coldston for the first three years after he graduated, and

then he went abroad on account of his mother's health; she died in Florence."

"Yes, yes," said the Bishop, "I remember all about him! He should have stayed at home after his mother died. He had an excellent offer from Coldston at that time; very unwise in him not to have taken it!" The Bishop shook his head disapprovingly.

"Perhaps he dislikes teaching."

"I believe he did mention some such thing, no really satisfactory objection—the fellow always was eccentric. Do you know that he never took his furniture away? He did it up in burlap and left it all, in case he should wish to come back. He tells me that it is in very good order. By the way, if I see him again, I shall ask him to come in to tea this afternoon. We can have it in the garden, the day is most unseasonably warm."

"I hardly know whether I shall be able to receive."

"Don't force yourself—I can send for little Sylvia. Er—Robinson writes, I believe; you haven't read anything of his, have you? It might be convenient to know what he is interested in."

"He doesn't always sign his articles." Miss Langdon spoke with admirable indifference. "The last two or three were on art—and music; sometimes he writes reviews."

"I am not surprised; I should judge that art

and music would be likely to interest Robinson; as for the reviews, he always had a certain critical streak. Still—" the Bishop considered a moment —"I shall ask him, anyhow! You can come down or not, just as you choose."

When her father left the room Miss Langdon lay back upon the lounge and closed her eyes. There was a clanging in her ears: ding, ding, ding; like the strokes of a muffled bell. She caught her breath and listened; it was the beating of her own heart, throbbing against some spring in the lounge.

Why had Robinson come back? The few dollars to be gained by finishing the work that Professor Moncrieff's broken health had caused to be left undone offered no adequate explanation.

Had he changed?

The careless, outward sweep of the hand; the half-bent, downward poise of the head; the rounded, student's shoulders and motionless, thoughtful pose that she had seen through the glass flashed to her memory; but that man was old —at least, no longer young! *What had life done to Robinson?* She caught her lip fiercely in her teeth to strangle a sob.

Eighteen years ago, down there in the garden, they had bade each other good-by.

Occasionally she had wondered whether it would not have been better to have shown him what she felt—discreetly, modestly, with half as much with-

drawal as advance? Some such avowal had been the price of happiness; but she did not know then, that happiness, once obtained, causes its price to be forgotten. Ah, why had he not forced her to tell him!

But youth, and poverty, and pressing obligations had handicapped him, and he had gone away without a word.

Too proud to show the effects of the blow, she had not even staggered; but, walking sedately with delicate, maidenly gravity, she had done all the things that she had done before: filling up the hours in the same old ways; performing her duties with the same exactitude, until—too long after to create comment, and with causes too apparent to awaken suspicion—she had drooped, and, for a time, had slipped aside from the savorless table that life had spread before her.

Still, a starved heart makes a hungry pride, and Miss Langdon had inherited much of her father's love of dominion; moreover, she was not a woman whom men ignore, and thus, gradually, a little circle, derisively called "the court," was formed about her: a company of the initiated, well chosen, in harmony with her mood. Late that afternoon they were nearly all in evidence at the Deanery tea, when, lying back in her long India lounging chair, she found herself, in spite of her fears of an east wind, able to "receive."

The predetermined looker-on in life, and he whose own fastidiousness had driven him, reluctantly, from the game; the instructor of too much talent to work under departmental authority, and the student of too much genius to master details—all these were there, delightful in the qualities of their defects. The Bishop, not being able to appreciate those brilliant virtues which make for failure, had invited a solid background of the prosperous and the effectual of his own choosing; still, he tolerated what he called "Sylvia's Swans," and moved among them with a very good grace. Incidentally they provided him with an excellent gauge of the strength of general discontent—for the Swans were nearly always in opposition—and much of the Bishop's administrative success, both in the college and in the diocese, was founded on his skilful use of the minority.

People were already beginning to go and it was very quiet in the garden. Little groups were scattered about talking softly together, birds twittered in the oak-trees, and sometimes a faint shout sounded from the college play-ground, which was far down across the river that flowed at the foot of the bluff upon which the Deanery and the Tower were built. The young oak leaves were all tossing and flapping on the swaying branches, and the thin light shade swept back and forth on the lawn like ripples on the sea.

Sylvia Cogswell, Miss Langdon's niece, sat behind the tea-table trying to protect the veering flame of the lamp from the wind. "Aunt Sylvia," she called, "what do you do when it blows this way?" She was stooping forward, her head bent, and did not notice that her aunt's attention had been diverted. A narrow gate had opened in the hedge, and a man came through it, who started quickly toward the tea-table. Looking up, Sylvia Cogswell caught a glance of delighted recognition.

"Ah, Mr. Robinson!" said the Bishop. "I must present you to my granddaughter, Miss Cogswell." The Bishop's tones were formal. "Miss Langdon—my daughter—I think you already know."

Robinson pulled himself together, and turned toward the slender figure lying, wrapped in shawls, in the wicker chair.

Miss Langdon rose, and when she resumed her seat her shawls remained upon the back of it.

"So you are the man who is going to live in the Tower!" said Sylvia Cogswell. "What do you find so attractive up there?"

Miss Langdon had turned away toward a little crowd of men who had surrounded her chair, and Robinson seated himself by the tea-table. "Solitude," he answered.

"Is solitude so impossible to achieve here below?"

"Up there you need not achieve it, it exists; moreover, I have the whole city at my feet."

"So has Sylvia!" interjected the Bishop unexpectedly.

"Times are not changed," murmured Robinson, looking toward Miss Langdon.

"That accounts for the bad advice my aunt gives me," said the younger Sylvia; "she would have me treat mankind as the dust beneath my feet."

"And what else is it?"

"Mankind is the star in my firmament!"

Robinson turned, laughing, toward Miss Langdon; but she was, apparently, absorbed in the talk of those about her.

"Ah, Robinson, glad to see you!" A stout little man, followed by his wife, was hurrying toward him across the lawn. "Mrs. Fanshawe was saying that she thought we might find you here."

Robinson rose, looking at him with puzzled eyes. "Fanshawe!" he said. "Mrs. Fanshawe, I knew you at once; and how is my little Margaret?"

"I am afraid you would find her almost as difficult to recognize as her father, if you saw her now," said Mrs. Fanshawe.

Professor Fanshawe straightened himself up pompously. "Your little Margaret has developed a will. She is a young woman of views, and is studying nursing in the City Hospital; these frivo-

lous functions have no attraction for her." His tone was slightly bitter. "But what is this I hear about your coming back to your old rooms?"

Robinson glanced upward to the Tower, whence came the sound of far-off hammering. "I am moving in now."

"You mean to climb all those stairs, at your age?"

"It is not a question of age, my dear," said Mrs. Fanshawe.

"Well, he can try it if he wishes; but he certainly is eighteen years older than he was."

"But not eighty pounds heavier."

Fanshawe reddened and stepped aside to make room for some new-comers who were gathering about the tea-table. "By the way, Robinson," he lowered his voice, "I hope you are coming to see me before long. As Dean of the College——"

Robinson made a slight congratulatory bow. "I am glad to know that. I hadn't heard."

"How should any one be expected to hear! Do I live in the Deanery?"

Mrs. Fanshawe laughed. "The Bishop knows that we don't want the Deanery; we have a much better house of our own."

"How does he know it? Has he ever given me a chance to inform him? Not he!"

Mrs. Fanshawe, regarding these questions as purely rhetorical, moved calmly away.

Fanshawe bent forward and looked up into Robinson's face confidentially. "Before you commit yourself to the Bishop's policy, Robinson, I should like you to meet some of the other men."

"I am afraid they need me up there in the Tower," stammered Robinson; "I expected to stay here only a few minutes. I ought to go and speak to Miss Langdon now."

"Oh, just as you please!" said Fanshawe, slipping back with a slight air of offence. "Just as you please."

Robinson stood a few minutes watching the increasing throng of people and wondering under what new disguise he might meet another old friend.

"What is this strange news I hear? Is Saul among the Prophets?" asked a gentle, slightly drawling voice, at his elbow.

"Mrs. Maxwell!" he exclaimed, looking down at her, his face full of pleasure, "and is Professor Maxwell here?"

"No, I left him at home with his nose in his books. You'd better mind, or this college life will get a hold on you, too. It's mighty easy to become addicted to it! Of course you recognize Bennie," her eyes turned toward the young man at her side, who smiled and put out his hand.

"You would find it rather difficult to ride me about on your back now," he said.

"Bennie!" Robinson's tones were reproving. "What did you go and grow up for? You were ever so much better as you were! This is almost as much of a blow as it was to hear that Margaret Fanshawe was studying to be a trained nurse in the City Hospital."

Young Maxwell's eyes suddenly went searching eagerly about the garden. "Is Margaret here?" he asked. "Where is she?"

"I was given to understand that frivolous functions——"

But young Maxwell was gone and Robinson sadly shook his head.

"Have you spoken to Sylvia Langdon?" said Mrs. Maxwell, moving to join the group of people near Miss Langdon's chair.

"I have been trying to say 'how do you do' to her—or else 'good-by'—ever since I came; but I can't get up my courage to invade this crowd of adorers."

"Which is it going to be—good-by, or the other?"

"I haven't made up my mind; give me time." He laughed and drew back for her to pass him.

"It appears to me that you have had about time enough!" she said with her pretty, mischievous Southern accent.

"It is this growing up; it embarrasses me. Why couldn't people become younger, it would be fully

as easy for them; easier, in fact, you ought to know —you've done it."

Her face clouded. "Don't you trust these people that go about looking younger; they're only doing it to fool the enemy and hide their hearts; their old, tired hearts!" She made a little dramatic rush forward and the next minute was denouncing her husband in answer to Miss Langdon's inquiries. "No, he isn't here and he isn't ill! He is simply lost to every sense of social obligation. The men in Great Dulwich grow more utterly impossible every year!"

"Are they any worse than they are in Coldston, D'Orsey?" asked Miss Langdon, looking up at a tall man in front of her.

"Worse than Coldston? My dear Miss Langdon, perish the thought!" said D'Orsey in a pleasant voice, with an acquired intonation. "I think, however, that I might not be wrong in saying that the college man, all over the country, is so anxious to become a man of letters that he loses sight of the necessity of being, at the same time, a man of the world. Sometimes this is due to lack of opportunity; more often, to lack of time; and then again, it is due to—due to——"

"Lack of ability," suggested Robinson, regaining self-possession at the familiar sound of D'Orsey's easy periods.

"Why, Robinson! This is, indeed, a delightful

surprise. Now you should be able to speak for Coldston, you were born there."

"But educated in Great Dulwich!" supplied Miss Langdon.

"You will find us very unwilling to concede Mr. Robinson to you, D'Orsey; he doesn't belong to Coldston," cried Mrs. Maxwell.

D'Orsey, being a Coldston man himself, was but ill-pleased at these eager repudiations. "You must pardon me, ladies, if I suggest that Coldston, herself, may have a different opinion on that subject," he said, with even more than his usual elaboration of manner. "Coldston has already——"

Several departing guests here claimed Miss Langdon's attention, and Robinson drew D'Orsey to one side. "Don't say anything about that professorship, D'Orsey," he said; "the Coldston people would rather not have it known, especially as I have already declined it."

"Declined it? My dear fellow, what madness!" cried D'Orsey; but, with a gesture of warning, Robinson had left him, taking advantage of a break in the circle about Miss Langdon's chair to go to her side.

"It has been impossible to get a word with you," he said, "and now I must go away with the rest."

Miss Langdon rose and walked a few steps with him toward the little gate in the hedge, by which he had entered. Her ease of manner and the per-

fect self-possession, which he had been watching with secret amusement, gave place to a sudden access of shyness and she was, once more, the girl to whom he had said good-by in that same garden so many years ago. She offered him her hand; he took it, but before she could speak he had interrupted her.

"Don't say it!" he exclaimed.

She smiled and blushed. "Do not say what?"

"Do not say good-by."

"I had not meant to; I was about to say: 'You are welcome—home.' "

He bowed very low over her hand, and without another word left the garden and walked slowly across the grass toward the Tower.

As he entered the great central hall of the building, the sun shining through the window above him fell in long colored rays of light upon the tiled pavement at his feet; the place seemed inexpressibly splendid and dignified, and Robinson took off his hat a moment, as if he were entering a church. Then he sniffed, smiled, and put on his hat again. How well he remembered that slight stale whiff of cooking!

But he was in the mood when every old familiar thing is dear, and, with a remorseful gesture, he uncovered anew and walked the length of the hall.

Entering a narrow archway on his left, he ran, two steps at a time, up the flight of winding stairs

that led to his own apartment. As he unlocked his door it seemed as if all the years between his college days and the present had dropped away. The work-people had gone and, after making a short tour of inspection about the other two rooms, he came back to his study.

Crossing to the window, he looked down over the treetops upon a broad reach of river; below him there was a drawbridge, across which he could see the boys trooping from the game of foot-ball that had taken place on the other side. It reminded him that he must soon go down to dinner; but he looked about him with reluctance to leave the place. He had been a homeless man for many years, and this return to the old Tower brought with it the nearest approach he had yet known to that large feeling of peace and content which steals over us when we see our own possessions arranged in the midst of surroundings we love. Going to his western window he looked out beyond the college park, far along a road that wound toward the country. With another wide bend the river swept into sight again, shining here and there red in the sunset; in distant lands he had often thought of that view. It was associated with past moments of deepest feeling; around it and through it were woven all his youthful dreams. It was something sacred, and he had carefully concealed from every one the sacrifice he had made in order

to bring it into his life again. He had hushed D'Orsey that afternoon solely because he was sensitive about having it known that, for the sake of a few months in Great Dulwich, he had declined a permanent position that was not merely better paid, but of far greater importance. He did not know why he had taken this course. When he questioned himself he was apt to shrug his shoulders and tell himself that he had nothing and nobody depending upon him, and that therefore he had the right to do as he chose; if he saw fit to barter a future which included a certain amount of worldly position for the pleasure of spending the next few months with——

There his mind stopped. He never told himself with what, or with whom; but, as he stood looking out, his hands thrust deep in the pockets of the loose coat that he had put on to replace his more formal frock, Robinson was nearer happiness than he had been for many years.

## CHAPTER II

SYLVIA COGSWELL stayed to dinner at her grandfather's that evening. The young Cogswells were frequently seen at the Bishop's, partly because Miss Langdon was not always to be counted upon to appear at the table, and partly because Mrs. Cogswell had a theory that her father never liked to be left alone. To be left alone, Mrs. Cogswell felt, was a serious and annoying misfortune. Now the Bishop, although he bore their frequent society with great self-possession and equanimity, occasionally felt that there were times when he could dispense with the presence of his grandchildren.

The young people themselves quarrelled as to which of them should be sacrificed to what they considered their Aunt Sylvia's indolence; and that afternoon Harry Cogswell, who had looked in a few moments for a cup of tea, had informed his younger sister that she had got to stay at the Deanery, as he didn't mean to stand on his hind legs any longer that day.

Sylvia herself was inclined to be extremely pleasant that evening, especially as her aunt, instead of

going up to her room, had remained downstairs and taken the head of the table, as if it were a matter of course.

"What a lot of them were here this afternoon," said Sylvia, "and they were so funny! I wish you could have heard Mr. Fanshawe whispering to Mr. Robinson that before he had quite committed himself to the Bishop's policy he would like to have a few words with him!"

"What is that, Sylvia?" said her grandfather.

"Sylvia!" warned her aunt.

"Am I making mischief? But it was so interesting! I didn't know that you had a policy, grandpapa; what is it?"

The Bishop smiled at her but did not seem to think it was worth while to reply.

"Who is this Mr. Robinson?" Sylvia inserted a dubious fork into the sweetbread that had just been served her. It always annoyed the Bishop to be reminded of his son-in-law's *chef*. Not that he cared for the pleasures of the table, but he regarded it as only due to his position that all the details of life at the Deanery should be beyond reproach, and Sylvia's unconscious investigation had the effect of making him lose patience with Robinson.

"Mr. Robinson has taken Professor Moncrieff's place for the rest of this term, and perhaps for next year."

Sylvia cut into her sweetbread and tasted a very small portion. "Is that all? Then why were they making such a fuss about him? It seems to me that he is causing a stir in the pool quite beyond his deserts. What has he done, grandpapa?"

"I am sure I don't know; ask your aunt."

To Sylvia's surprise, her aunt flushed crimson to the roots of her hair. "The last thing I saw of his," she said, "was an article on the tendencies of modern art."

"Oh!" There was a note of disappointment in Sylvia's tones.

"I had the impression that he was also musical. Was he not musical, Sylvia?" The Bishop addressed his daughter.

"Yes, I believe he was."

"To my certain knowledge," said Sylvia Cogswell, "there never has been so accomplished a genius here before. What else does he do? Dance a tight-rope?"

The Bishop laughed. "The thing that seems to take the most hold upon the public mind is that he climbs the Tower stairs three or four times a day."

Again, to her niece's surprise, the color flooded Miss Langdon's face. "Aunt Sylvia really leads such a quiet life that she would blush if you mentioned a tom-cat, I do believe," she thought to herself impatiently. "I cannot see," she added,

aloud, "what there is about him that makes everybody so much interested in him. He is a plain, if not an ugly man, and he is old, too."

"Age is comparative," said the Bishop calmly.

"As things go," pursued young Sylvia, "he is old; he must be nearly forty. He is beginning to grow gray, he is also shy and a little awkward—but horridly observing and deductive. I caught him at it, two or three times."

"You caught him at it?" Her grandfather's tones were disapproving.

"I couldn't help watching; he seems to be keeping such a lot back. He made me feel so young, and at the same time," she clasped her hands together, and put her elbows on the table, "he made me feel as if I were quite perfect, and unexpectedly delightful."

"He has the manner of a person who is successful with children," said the Bishop.

"But not with old people—you don't like him, do you, grandpapa?"

"Between old age and a second childhood it is hard to choose; it seems to me that I have every motive for declining to answer."

"Never mind, I know. You like music, grandpapa, and you like painting, and you especially like sculpture; but you can't help despising the people who do them."

The Bishop was in a better temper; Sylvia had

eaten her sweetbread with a decided appetite. "Didn't I see one of the Maxwells here this afternoon?" he said. "What became of him?"

"He ran away the minute he heard that Margaret Fanshawe was not coming," said Sylvia.

"Margaret? Which one is that? The one who wears the long yellow braids?"

"She did about four years ago."

"There is but one Fanshawe," said Miss Langdon; "I am not surprised at your mistake, papa. Margaret looks quite old with her hair done up."

"She looked about Sylvia's age."

Sylvia's eyes flashed quickly to her aunt's face and then away again.

"Margaret Fanshawe is several years older than Sylvia!" Miss Langdon seemed unaccountably annoyed.

"Only two," said Sylvia, "she and Harry are both twenty-one."

"So that is my lassie with the lint-white locks!" said the Bishop pleasantly. "I came near asking her what had become of herself; I am glad that young Maxwell is interested in her."

"See what an impression you have been giving your grandfather, Sylvia!"

"Everybody puts the two together!" Sylvia was on the defensive. "It has been 'Bennie and Margaret' ever since they were little bits of children."

"No more than Margaret and Harry, or Margaret and any of the other boys."

"Ah, Harry, too?" inquired the Bishop, with a shade less of enthusiasm. "It would not have occurred to me that Harry would find Mr. Fanshawe's daughter congenial."

"Margaret isn't Mr. Fanshawe," said Sylvia, "nor Mrs. Fanshawe, either, for that matter."

"But Margaret," said Miss Langdon, speaking distinctly, "is a mixture of both her father and her mother."

Sylvia's eyes flashed, but her voice was quite sweet and respectful as she said to her aunt, "It is so difficult to see the good points of people whose characters are radically different from our own."

When Sylvia and her aunt began to address each other in these tones of deliberate amiability the Bishop always changed the subject, and so talk wandered to other things until dinner was over, when he left them in the drawing-room and went across the hall to his study. Stepping to the window, as was his custom, he stood with his hands clasped behind him looking up at the Tower. All at once his brow contracted and he reached up hastily and drew down the shade. Above him, Robinson's lamp was gleaming faintly.

"I wish the fellow had chosen to room in one of the other buildings!" he muttered, and turned to his desk.

It was late when he put away his papers and returned to the drawing-room, and he was surprised and pleased to find his daughter there, reading quietly. So much of his life in the last years had been spent alone that he was hardly aware that he preferred society. He sat down now and stretched out his hands to the small fire that was burning in the fireplace, for Miss Langdon had been right in regard to the east wind and the evening was cold.

"Did Sylvia go home alone?" he asked.

Miss Langdon put down her book. "James said that he was to stop at the Fanshawes' for Harry."

The Bishop thought a moment. "This young Maxwell—the one that was here this afternoon—is he the oldest?"

"Yes; he is a special pet of mine; you have often seen him here."

"I understand that he is studying medicine. They speak well of him at the Medical School—I have inquired. He seems to be a strong fellow, of good physique. Mrs. Maxwell was a Ponsonby; those Ponsonbys, for Southerners, had excellent constitutions. I wish that Maxwell, himself, had as valuable an inheritance. You haven't noticed, have you, how ill he has been looking of late?"

She shook her head and waited in some surprise; even she could not become accustomed to

her father's inexplicable displays of interest in his faculty; they were almost as startling as his customary attitude of indifference.

The Bishop picked up the tongs and moved a log a little farther back into the fireplace. "Is Maxwell writing a book?" he asked. "We never see him anywhere."

"Judging by what I hear from Bennie he is almost constantly at work; he has classes in two or three of the girls' schools in the city."

"That is a bad thing; it wears the men out, and injures the quality of the work they give the college. I suppose that Maxwell has nothing but his salary?" His voice ended with a slight tone of inquiry.

"I fancy so. With all those children to educate, the family probably needs all that he can make."

"And they haven't laid anything by?"

"How should I know?"

"I do not think that they have; Mrs. Maxwell strikes me as an inadequate wife for a poor man, and if Maxwell does not stop work soon he is going to break down. I am afraid that your young friend Bennie will have to put his shoulder to the wheel."

"Bennie has cost his father nothing since he left college! He makes enough money, as Mr. Bent's secretary, to pay all his expenses."

"He will have to do more than that."

"But, papa, no one has spoken of Mr. Maxwell as breaking down; you may be mistaken. Think what giving up his studies would mean for Bennie. To make a success in life a man must be very thoroughly equipped, nowadays."

"Men have made successes who have started in life ill-equipped; and men have made failures who have begun with the greatest promise. Now there is Maxwell himself. When he graduated we expected as much of him as—we did of this Robinson!" He did not add that he had started in life himself with a heavy handicap; it never occurred to the Bishop that his own case was parallel. Physically, he considered his people of better stuff than either the Maxwells or the Ponsonbys—the Langdons were, all of them, built of that stout stuff which helps toward the making of a successful career—and the Bishop had a simple way of not forgetting these things. It was part of his trade as a judge of men.

"But Bennie is a genius!"

"So is his father; but unless a man has a body of unusual capacity, or a temperament of unusual selfishness, or a will of unusual strength, genius, coupled with poverty, is more of a hindrance than a help. Now if your Bennie were only an ordinary young man I might give him Folsom's place. Folsom has an offer of a position that will pay him better than mine, and he wants to marry."

"When is he going?"

"As soon as I can let him off. If young Maxwell can come to me at once I am willing to give him the work."

Miss Langdon opened her mouth to protest. Bennie Maxwell's career meant a great deal to her.

Her father smiled. Her reluctance to sacrifice her favorite amused him.

They sat a few minutes longer, looking at the fire, but Miss Langdon was too much perturbed to read any more, and bidding her father goodnight she went slowly up to her room.

The gas was turned low and everything was prepared for the night. She hesitated a moment, then, shutting her door and locking it, she turned out the light. The shutters of the room were carefully closed to keep out the sunshine in the morning. Cautiously she drew up the window screen, unfastened the shutters slowly, and pressed them back against the house with the utmost care, lest they make a noise in knocking against the outer wall. Then she knelt by the window.

Black against the sky stood the Tower, all the lights out; but she knew that Robinson was leaning between the arches of the upper gallery, watching the moonlight, and smoking. She was sure that he was looking down into the garden, and at the house; she wondered of what he was thinking.

## CHAPTER III

THE carriage, with Sylvia Cogswell in it, was just turning out of the gates of the Deanery grounds when some one hailed the driver, who drew up, and Harry opened the door and got in.

"I thought we were going to pick you up at the Fanshawes'. Why didn't you come down and see Aunt Sylvia?"

"I hadn't had time to scrub up my soul. Aunt Sylvia always wants a little piece handed over, shining bright, for inspection."

"And didn't you go to Margaret's?"

"Yes; but Margaret's mind was wool-gathering. She was worried; I suppose it was something about this nursing business."

"Is that why you came away so soon?"

"No. Bennie Maxwell is the reason; and he'd already been in to meet her this afternoon, and walked out from the hospital with her! It was quite plain to me that Margaret wanted to hear the end of whatever they'd been talking of—and Bennie put on his elderly manner—so between them they shunted me."

"Harry, they never would!"

"I can't say whether they did it on purpose or not—at any rate I came away. There are times when Margaret's a regular bore."

Sylvia recognized the signs of ill-temper and leaning back in a corner of the coupé gave herself up to her own thoughts. Before long Harry pulled out his cigar-case and lighted a match.

"I wouldn't," said Sylvia. "Mamma hates to have the coupé smell of smoke."

"Good Heavens!" Harry irritably threw both match and cigar out of the window. "Tell James to stop and I will walk home."

Sylvia remained quietly leaning in her corner. She saw no reason why she should tell James anything when Harry had very good lungs of his own.

"What are you sulking for?" said Harry a few minutes later.

Sylvia laughed. There would have been more frequent quarrels between the young Cogswells if it had not been for Sylvia's merciful sense of humor. "I'm not sulking, I'm thinking about the new man."

"What new man?"

"A Mr. Robinson."

"Oh, that fellow! Do you know, he is rather a good sort; Tom Bent remembers him: a kind of all-round genius. He used to be first violin in old Bent's quartette. By the way, Tom will be out

to-morrow afternoon to play tennis—half-past three. He said for you to be ready."

"That is a charming message!"

"What's the use of standing on your dignity with your cousin?"

"Tom Bent is not a cousin."

"His mother is papa's second cousin."

"That is near!" scoffed Sylvia.

Harry made no reply and the rest of the drive passed in silence. When they reached home they found their father and mother sitting in the library, having returned early from a dinner-party at the house of one of the professors.

"It seems to me," said Mrs. Cogswell, "that these dinners with the college people get duller and duller. I didn't use to feel it when I was young and lived at home."

"All dinners get duller." Mr. Cogswell, who was smoking in a far corner of the room, did not look up from the paper he was reading under a gaslight of his own.

"But the people to-night seemed to have so little in common with the rest of the world. Nobody keeps things going but poor Jeanie Maxwell, and she was almost too spasmodic to be agreeable. She looked anxious—I wonder if there is anything wrong."

Harry opened his mouth as if to speak, and then resolved upon silence.

"Who was at your aunt's to tea this evening, Sylvia?" asked her mother.

"Mr. Robinson, the new man. Did you ever know him?"

"Silly's been talking about him all the way home," remarked Harry, who was now smoking, unreproved, in a big chair in the shadows at the back of the room.

"I wish you wouldn't call me Silly!" Sylvia answered in a tart undertone.

"Now do you know, I used to like that Robinson!" Mr. Cogswell spoke as if this were a surprising exception.

Mrs. Cogswell yawned. "He had excellent manners—for a Coldston man."

"He isn't a Coldston man," growled Harry; "he couldn't help being born there, poor devil!"

"He was quite different from other people, and never seemed to care what anybody thought of him," said Mrs. Cogswell reminiscently.

"No one but Sylvia," amended her husband.

"I?" cried Sylvia.

"Not you, Silly!"

"Are you the only Sylvia?" asked her father affectionately.

"She's pretty near it!" Harry felt remorseful when he found himself unremonstrated with. "Sylvia is about the whole thing this winter. No fellow feels that he's really in it until he has been

refused by her at least once. I heard some of them say that, in the club this afternoon. They didn't know that I was there until I got up to stop them."

"What else did they say?" asked Sylvia eagerly. "Who was it?"

Mr. Cogswell put down his paper and sat up straight in his chair. "Most ungentlemanly! To mention a young lady by name in a public place!"

"It was only two or three men in the little reading-room, father," apologized Harry, "and there was nothing that any one could object to in the way they spoke—one would have thought that Sylvia was the Goddess of—well, not exactly Liberty—but just a goddess. And besides, they were nearly all relations, or almost relations."

"Oh!" Sylvia's tones were regretful. "It was only Johnnie Cogswell and Will Langdon and Tom Bent! I'm sure I never refused him," she added, reflectively.

"I thought you had, Sylvia," said her mother.

"N-n-no, not definitely."

There was a pause, broken by Harry, who took his cigar out of his mouth to say, "Well!"

"My dear child," began her father gently.

"You know what I mean, papa; it didn't seem fair to Tom to let you think that I had done it, when he never formally asked me."

"See here, Sylvia," said Harry, "this is not

square. I know Tom thinks he asked you, from something he said to me, and you have got to be either on or off, you know."

"You needn't worry, Tom and I understand each other."

"You may understand Tom, but are you quite sure that he understands you, Sylvia?" said Mrs. Cogswell.

"It is a perfectly straightforward thing," protested Sylvia. "I didn't allow Tom quite to speak, and I didn't quite answer. And so we—we just agreed to lay it on the table. For the present, that is enough; any time I may change my mind——"

"I thought you hadn't made it up," interjected Harry.

"Any time we wish to renew the subject we can do it," said Sylvia. "We agreed to give each other two weeks' notice."

"This is a most extraordinary situation," said Mrs. Cogswell. "Tom Bent is no school-boy; you ought not to put him into a position of this kind."

"Of all the absurd—" began Harry; but his father silenced him with a glance. Sylvia's eyes were full of tears.

"I don't mind you, papa," she said, "or mamma; but if Harry gets to meddling with this he will spoil everything. I can't think how we got on to the subject. If only—" she did not finish.

Harry had risen and was kneeling at her side.

"Don't you know me better than that, Silly Billy?" he said, in a low voice; "I am not going to interfere."

Sylvia pulled out her handkerchief and held it to her eyes.

Harry rubbed his head against hers. "Don't you think I have any sense?" he murmured. "Any knowledge of what I can and what I can not touch?"

"There you go," said Sylvia's muffled voice, "making something of it when there is nothing there."

"I'm not making anything of it, not anything!" Again he rubbed his head against hers. "Silly Billy," he whispered, "let's lay it on the table."

"Come, Sylvia, you can trust Harry!" Mr. Cogswell's voice was admonitory.

Sylvia rubbed her eyes, looked up, and laughed. "I do believe it all began with that old Mr. Robinson," she said. "I shall never forgive him! By the way, mamma, aren't you going to ask him here soon? He is really very interesting. I can't think why grandpapa doesn't like him."

"Oh, your grandfather is not given to liking people!" said Mr. Cogswell. "Besides, he always was just a wee bit jealous of Robinson."

Mrs. Cogswell rose majestically. "Good-night, Henry," she said, in the Bishop's best manner. "Come, Sylvia, it is growing late."

Sylvia went to her room with several unsolved problems teasing her brain. "Why should grandpapa—grandpapa!—be jealous of any one?" she thought. "It is odd that Mr. Robinson should imagine he knew me; he looked so astonished, so delighted—could he have taken me for Aunt Sylvia?

"*He really did!*" She spoke aloud and there was a faint tone of regret in her voice. "I suppose I must look as Aunt Sylvia did at my age; but I thought," going toward the mirror to examine, "I thought there was more character in my face—not that I don't know how lovely she is, only one gets so tired of one's relatives' looks. But for grandpapa to be jealous of Mr. Robinson—oh!—it was because of Aunt Sylvia. *How perfectly absurd!*"

## CHAPTER IV

AT about half-past eight the next morning Bennie Maxwell came out on the steps of his father's house and stood there a moment with a letter in his hand.

The Maxwells did not live within the enclosure of the college grounds, but in the end building of a brick block opposite the gates of the park. Bennie came down the steps and walked slowly up the road, reading his letter as he went along. It was a businesslike proposition from the Bishop; still the young man knew, by instinct, what was underlying the offer, and he was troubled.

He had left the rest of the family at breakfast and had come out to meet Margaret Fanshawe, knowing that she was due that morning at the hospital. He believed that his mind was not made up and that he needed her advice; but as he plodded steadily up the road he was unconsciously renouncing many things: the healing that he had hoped to bring to his fellow men; the scientific research that was to have made him famous; the dear ambitions that were not altogether devoid of self-seeking, and the aspirations that bore no trace of anything lower

than love for his kind; in spite of this his face had lost no jot of its cheerful confidence when he met Margaret a few minutes later, and the two turned and walked along the road together. "You know what I spoke to you about last night?"

"Your father?"

"Yes."

"Is he ill to-day, again?"

"No—but the Bishop has offered me Mr. Folsom's place."

"Oh! I am sorry; it will keep you here all summer. You will not be able to come to Arrichat."

Bennie looked at her a moment in surprise, then laughed. "It will keep me here all winter, too. It is a permanent position."

"But you can't undertake a thing like that in addition to your other work!"

"The other must wait."

"Bennie!"

"You know what I told you yesterday? Here is my chance to help. The salary is good; it would be cowardly to let it slip through my fingers."

"But in a little while you will be making five times as much in your practice; it is penny-wise, Bennie."

"When you've got no pounds to fool with there is nothing left to do but to treat your pennies respectfully."

Margaret walked on, looking straight ahead of

her. She was a tall girl with heavy braids of smooth yellow hair and a look of splendid health and strength. People had a way of saying that Margaret Fanshawe was a little cold and unsympathetic; but as Bennie turned, wondering at her silence, he saw that tears were coursing down her cheeks. "I can't bear it; you are giving up everything, you always have given up everything, for the others!"

"No more than anybody else would do with such a pack of youngsters as we have in the house! If you want to see some real giving up look at my father."

Margaret pulled out her handkerchief and unfolded it with a little snap, as if it were a whip.

"Don't you see that there is nothing else to be done?" Bennie persisted.

"You don't think that there is anything seriously wrong with your father?"

"I can't tell. One ought never to say; but all my life I have had a kind of medical instinct. I can remember making a correct—well, you would hardly call it a diagnosis—of what was wrong with Professor Moncrieff, at least five years ago."

"Do you mean you think it is the same?"

"Don't ask!"

They walked on a few yards in silence; she seemed to be thinking deeply.

"Hello," said Bennie, turning suddenly at a

sound of builders' hammers, "what monster is that going up over there?"

"It is the Caldwells' new house," said Margaret shortly.

Bennie looked at it with a gleam of amusement in his eyes. "I hadn't noticed it before; it looks like a barracks."

"They need one, with all those children."

"No one knows that better than I; we are packed like sardines, in our little box."

"But your house is lovely, I like it better than ours. You have more really beautiful things."

"Ye-es—but, on the other hand—we are not able to build a barracks."

"But you are not like the Caldwells! Think of your mother, Bennie, and—of Mrs. Caldwell!"

"Poor little mamma, she regards Mrs. Caldwell as an unattainable ideal! In her soul I think she'd rather see than be one; but if she could remain herself, with Mrs. Caldwell's capacity for saving, I think that her cup of happiness would be full. But about this position; of course, after what I told you last night, you understand that things at home are—precarious!"

"Must you accept? It will spoil all your plans."

"If it doesn't spoil any one else's plans but mine," Bennie began haltingly. "You see, Margie——"

Margaret's color had begun to die away from her cheeks, leaving a little ugly rim of red around her eyes; the sight of it tore Bennie's heart.

"You will be started in your profession long before I am in mine." Bennie tried to laugh as he spoke.

"So much the better," said Margaret soberly.

A horn was blowing far up the road. It was the coach that came through every pleasant morning and took passengers for the city. "I shall have to go," Margaret whispered. Her color had continued to recede; it startled Bennie to see how white she was.

"Hadn't you better ride inside?" he suggested when the coach came up and she turned to climb to the top.

She shook her head; for the last few minutes she had been nerving herself to say something; she had not been able to achieve it; but as the coachman gathered up his reins she felt that if she did not tell Bennie then the thought that she had in her mind, it would remain forever unspoken. There were no other passengers on the coach that morning; the driver started up the horses and the vehicle began to move away. "Bennie," called Margaret, looking back over her shoulder, "don't mind if I get through first—I'll wait for you."

Bennie's jaw dropped; for a second he gazed

beatifically at Margaret's back, disappearing down the road; then his face fell. "What if she didn't mean it, that way, after all?" he said to himself, and hurried to the Bishop's office.

With his usual economy of time, the Bishop had written to Bennie that unless he meant to take the position into consideration he had better write a refusal. They now had a short talk together in regard to the amount of work and the hours, and the affair was almost settled when the Bishop said: "And your father, he is quite willing to have you undertake this?"

"I have not told him, sir."

"You must do so at once."

"He has a lecture at eleven."

"Then you have just fifteen minutes."

Bennie hurried home, and reaching there at five minutes of the hour was surprised to find his father lying on the lounge in his study. "I thought you had a lecture, father," he said.

"I can't go this morning," said Professor Maxwell; "I am feeling faint, only a little so, but——"

Bennie sat down and put his finger upon his father's pulse.

Professor Maxwell smiled. "If I am going to be ill it is a good thing to have a doctor in the family."

"Should you be much disappointed if you did not have a doctor in the family? I don't know

what you will say, but I have this morning accepted Mr. Folsom's place as secretary to the Bishop."

His father sat up on the lounge and looked at him for a few moments. "Is it as bad as that?" he said, at last.

"You can't go on working this way much longer. You need a rest, and you need it soon."

"Needing rest and taking it are two different things." Professor Maxwell sank back upon the pillows, his hand turned in Bennie's and gripped it, tight. "I must get the boys and Nellie started," he said, "and then I can afford more leisure."

"If it were not for those schools in the city——"

"But you see they add a great deal to our income, and I have set my heart on having you older ones start life free from obligations—I don't know whether you know it; but there is rather a heavy debt—I lost in the Middle Ontez; and my hands were heavily weighted when we began life—your mother and I—yet, I felt then that the world was before me. Perhaps I haven't made the most of my opportunities."

"You have made everything!" cried Bennie, almost in tears.

His father looked at him and smiled again. "I have done my best; that is a great deal for a man to say, an arrogant speech; but if it is too proud a claim I hope I may be forgiven. I have done my best," he repeated slowly, "and after that—" he

was looking out of the window, and at the expression in his face and the tone of his voice Bennie involuntarily put up his hand, as if to take off his hat—"after that, the outcome is in other hands than mine. I might have wished things to be different, and yet I am not sure that I can go so far as that. Whatever happens will be right."

He leaned back upon the cushions and closed his eyes. Bennie waited for him to speak again. The silence of the room deepened. Outside, some birds twittered lovingly in a tree that grew near the window. The tired man on the lounge turned himself to take a more comfortable posture.

After a moment Bennie bent forward to explain his plans more fully, then he stopped. His father was asleep. It told much for the relief he felt, but more for the utter fatigue and prostration from which he was suffering.

## CHAPTER V

ON a wet morning, some three weeks later, Miss Langdon opened her eyes to a smooth expanse of pale gray sky. The leaves of the oak-trees outside her window were freeing themselves, with a worried, weary motion, of the constant importunities of a dripping rain, and the bell on the college chapel far down the park rang out a faint chime and then struck seven. She listened to it idly, wondering why she had unclosed the shutters and drawn the blind the night before; suddenly the decision she had then come to made itself felt. She rose, dressed, and hurried down to breakfast, to the Bishop's unconcealed surprise.

The whole household, in fact, was disturbed at her untimely appearance; even to the elderly housemaid, who followed her defiantly into the drawing-room, after breakfast, and reproachfully finished the dusting.

"You may light the fire here, Sarah," Miss Langdon said. "I shall write my letters downstairs."

"Josephine has taken them to your room, Miss."

"Very well, get them." Such decision of tone

had not been heard from Miss Langdon for many years, and Sarah, who had become proficient in the guidance of her mistress's vacillations, went upstairs slowly, and took a long time to come back again, in order to show her stern disapproval of caprice.

"If Miss Sylvia do mean to be after coming to her breakfast this way and putting everything crooked in the house, I, for one, should like to be hearing of it beforehand," she remarked to Josephine.

"She rang me up at siven for her hot water," said Josephine in injured tones.

"And a very good thing, too! The way you do be lying abed in the mornings is a plain disgrace. As for Miss Sylvia, she has a right to get up when she pleases. There's nobody fonder of Miss Sylvia than I am myself—but I do hate things irreg'lar."

"And don't I love the very ground she walks on? It puts a person out not to know what's expected of them, that's all I'm complaining of."

"When you've lived at the Bishop's a little longer, you'll find out that things isn't going to be run to suit the convenience of the upstairs maid. I'd bring her hot water at five if she wanted it, and be glad to!"

"It'd be just as well if you'd get the drawin'-room decent for her to come into by eight!"

Quite unaware that she was tolerated by her servants as a beloved but somewhat troublesome household pet, Miss Langdon waited at her desk in the deep bay-window, peacefully enjoying the long, blue, misty reaches of the park, until Sarah's tardy return, with a large pile of letters, roused her to a consideration of the duties of the day. She sat a long while debating upon the various invitations piled up on the desk before her, and it was late when she took the last of them to Bennie Maxwell, with whom rested the final decision as to the relative importance of the Bishop's social obligations; for, except where these bore directly on the welfare of the college or the diocese, the Bishop himself viewed them all with impartial indifference, and resented being troubled with them.

"I beg that you will not exert yourself further, Sylvia!" he exclaimed, on her fourth visit to the library for purposes of consultation. "Mr. Maxwell will have ample leisure to attend to these in the afternoon."

"But there are no more left!"

The Bishop picked up the pile of notes and ran them over in his hand. "It strikes me that you have been sending some surprising acceptances lately. We were at the Fanshawes' tea only last week; surely we do not need to dine with them again next?"

"We have gone about so much among our own

friends this last winter; we really ought to see more of the college people; you know——"

"Very well, very well, my dear! I will not detain you further; my confidence in your judgment is quite perfect—except that I must beg to draw the line at a Fanshawe dinner. And now, Mr. Maxwell, as I was saying——"

Miss Langdon hurried out of the room and Bennie, who had been holding open the door, softly closed it after her. She was hurt; what were invitations to her? Why should she be supposed to prefer one place to another? The house felt suddenly uncomfortably warm and she stepped out upon the stone flags of the porch for a breath of air. The Tower still showed faintly gray, tinted like a delicate water-color, in the lingering mist above the exquisite green of the rain-washed leaves. She was standing at the edge of the porch looking up at it, when from under the archway in the hedge Robinson appeared, hurrying along the narrow path that skirted the lawn. Miss Langdon became quite pale and gathered her gown in her hand as if she were about to run away. Her wall of sheltered seclusion had crumbled before her without warning, and she felt herself exposed to the pitiless gaze of her whole little world—her father, Bennie, Josephine, Sarah! But it would never do to try to elude Robinson like a bashful school-girl!

From the other end of the park the chimes were

ringing for one o'clock. Robinson seemed irresolute and stood on the gravel below her with his hat off. "I beg pardon, but am I too late to see the Bishop before luncheon? I had no idea that it was more than eleven; the morning has flown——"

At the sight of his embarrassment her self-possession returned. "Come in out of the rain," she said almost gayly.

"This is not rain! This is——"

"What?" she asked.

He had come up the steps and stood looking down at her. "The stuff that dreams are made of," he answered, after a moment's hesitation.

She turned away and he followed her into the house.

"But are you sure that it will be convenient for your father to see me now?"

"On the contrary, I hardly think it would be safe; he has but this moment turned me out of the room, and if you want anything from him you had better stay to luncheon and ask him afterward." She had grown reckless, and felt an inclination to fling Robinson defiantly in their faces.

"But—ought I to stay? Is there time for me to go back to the Tower?—you see—I have not on a wedding garment."

Miss Langdon went to the side of the room and touched the bell. "Save your wedding garment until there is a wedding," she said.

"Do you really wish it?"

"I? Wish it?" Her face went crimson. "Oh, Sarah, put on a place for Mr. Robinson!"

Robinson looked up at Sarah and smiled; she remembered him well, but gave no sign of recognition. "Isn't that the same Sarah?" he asked carelessly, when she had disappeared. "Or do you get them by the quantity?"

The color was dying slowly from Miss Langdon's face. He wondered at it. "It is the same," she said, with an effort; "wholly unchanged, like the rest of things in Great Dulwich?"

"But are things unchanged?"

"Is there a better judge than yourself?"

Robinson's eyes wandered to the garden. "The hedges have grown." It seemed an idle speech.

"But there has been a corresponding improvement in the highways," she answered quickly.

"Your father has done wonders. We are well on toward the front rank of the second-class colleges, and that in spite of our denominational handicap; but I was not thinking shop, I was thinking of other things. This, for example—" he made a motion with his hand—"it is the same long, dim, silent, low-ceiled, flower-filled room. How well I remember the scent of these flowers! But the colors are more harmonious than they used to be, even the old furniture is more advantageously placed, there are scores of beautiful new things,

and I miss"—he counted—"at least five beloved monstrosities!"

"Only five? The attic is filled with them."

"I shall not ask to have the noble exiles returned; it is enough for me to know that they still exist. In my heart, I prefer the drawing-room as it is at present; it has kept pace with my inner vision—to have found it otherwise would have been disappointing."

She could not think of anything to say; she had fallen dumb before a cutting fear of the censorship of the past. "How can we help changing?" she said, at last determined to break the futile silence.

"But I deny that we have," he spoke with sudden vivacity, "things have changed, but the people are the same! Fanshawe has grown stout, but he remains Fanshawe—except for that final 'e'. When did he annex that?"

"About the same time that Mr. D'Orsey detached his 'D'."

"And I wrote to him this morning with it hard and fast to the rest of him, and left out Mrs. Fanshawe's 'e' in a note I sent her at the same time."

"She and Margaret never put the 'e' on; they ignore it completely. No one has ever heard them refer to it."

"Two more people unchanged," said Robinson: —"D'Orsey, Fanshawe, your father, Mrs. Fan-

shawe, Margaret, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell, Bennie——"

"How they count up!" she interrupted, as he paused, with the forefinger of his right hand on the middle finger of his left. "Are there any more?"

Smilingly, but in silence, Robinson was telling off two more fingers, when the Bishop entered the drawing-room and, after a moment's hesitation, came forward and shook hands interrogatively.

"I have persuaded Mr. Robinson to stay and take luncheon with us," said Miss Langdon.

"I had been hoping to have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Robinson at dinner," said the Bishop. He was not glad to see Robinson, and he was determined not to be compelled to say he was. Robinson was to have been invited to dine, in due season. This informal appearance was uncalled for, and of a part with the extraordinary conduct by which Sylvia had been disturbing the even tenor of the day. As they went out to the dining-room he tried to recall what it was about Robinson that used to annoy him in this same manner; and Robinson, who was abnormally sensitive, felt so much disturbed that he quite forgot his reasons for being there, and during the greater part of the luncheon conversation languished.

"Your life abroad must almost have weaned you away from your own country," the Bishop re-

marked, at last, with stately coldness. "I understand that much of your time was spent in Florence."

"And of course you knew Mr. Denbeigh," said Miss Langdon, looking up with sudden interest.

The Bishop frowned.

"Yes, I knew him." The admission was reluctant.

"I had understood that you were friends," said the Bishop; "his last book—was it not dedicated to you?"

"I believe that I am not mentioned in the dedication." Robinson's voice was crisp, almost angry.

The Bishop's eyes twinkled; he had found a vulnerable spot! "Mr. Denbeigh has made a great reputation with a certain class of people—and a very wide one it is—his popularity is unbounded."

"I saw very little of him until my last year in Florence," said Robinson. "At that time we happened to be thrown together at the same *pension*. My mother was ill—we did not dream how ill—and our quarters were given over to nurses and doctors. I had a quantity of work on hand, and Denbeigh, who came to the *pension* for his meals only, had a very large and comfortable apartment where, for a time, I went to write—" Robinson hesitated, he had no desire to explain himself, but he still divined the Bishop's dislike of Denbeigh and

he did not wish him to misunderstand the relation between them. "I left at the end of February," he concluded lamely.

"How long ago was that?" asked the Bishop.

"Some seven years."

"Not long before he married Paula Gates," said Miss Langdon. "You must have known her!"

"No, she came in April, and as I did not go back until several months after Denbeigh died, and as by that time Mrs. Denbeigh had returned to this country, I missed her altogether."

"You have met her here, of course?"

"Several times; in fact I had the pleasure of dining at the Gates place last week, and Mrs. Gates has asked me to come out this evening also; her daughter Annchen is going to play with Mr. Bent's quartette. Annchen used to be a pet of mine in Florence and I knew her mother very well. Mrs. Gates and Denbeigh——"

"You knew that Paula Gates and her brother were cousins of ours!" said Miss Langdon hastily.

"I had heard it—Mrs. Gates and Denbeigh were most kind to me at a time of great trouble. It is something that I ought not to—that I cannot forget."

"It always has been a matter of astonishment to me"—the Bishop spoke as one not afraid to take any bull by the horns—"that Mr. Denbeigh did not leave his papers in the hands of Mrs. Gates.

They were friends, she had known him long and well, she was a mature woman, and although she never ranked very high as a writer, still she was not unaccustomed to the use of her pen; while Paula, who was little more than a girl when her husband died, has for five years been weighed down with the responsibility of getting out this enormous biography——"

"Paula must be nearly thirty, and she had written two novels before she was married."

"Paula is just twenty-eight years and five months of age"—the Bishop liked precision—"and those two novels were a youthful folly that she has had the good sense not to repeat."

Robinson had leaned his elbow forgetfully on the table while the Bishop was speaking. "I understood that the Denbeigh biography had been given up," he said.

"Virtually it has," said Miss Langdon.

"Virtually it ought to be," the Bishop rejoined. "There is no reason why that man's biography should be written, and no justice in Paula's being expected to immolate herself further on the altar of Mrs. Gates' mistaken enthusiasm."

"Papa!" Miss Langdon's tones were horrified, but Robinson, with his chin in the palm of his hand, thoughtfully nodded his head in approval. The Bishop's eyes brightened and the two men exchanged a glance of mutual comprehension. It

was a relief to the Bishop to see that his guest had no leaning toward Denbeigh, and, later, when they rose from the table, he seemed almost sorry to bid Robinson good-by, as an engagement in the city made it necessary for him to leave the house at once.

Miss Langdon went to the door with her father and when she returned to the drawing-room Robinson was standing by the table, looking at a small framed photograph. "That is not at all a bad picture of Paula Denbeigh," she said, bending to look at it with him.

Robinson turned toward her with dull eyes; the picture was plainly not the chief matter at that moment occupying his attention. "Mrs. Denbeigh," he said, "while she is perfectly courteous, shows a certain reluctance—an unmistakable coldness toward me——"

"I hope you have not taken a dislike to Paula!"

Robinson looked horrified. "A dislike? That would be presumption! Indeed I am afraid, so far as dislike goes, that it is the other way; with Mr. Denbeigh I am *persona non grata.*"

"But have you any reason to suspect such an absurdity?"

"Nothing definite." Robinson's eyes returned to the picture. "She is not beautiful."

"Paula?" Miss Langdon's tones were incredulous,

"She has no need of beauty. I cannot understand how she came to marry Denbeigh. Do you imagine that it could have been—? But never mind!"

"That it could have been what?"

"Those books of hers—I have read them lately—they do not exactly give the impression of having been written by a babe in arms, and yet she couldn't have been much over twenty when they were published. As the work of a mature woman they would be interesting, even powerful; but, coming from little more than a child they strike me as abnormal, as morbid; the very thing that would attract——"

Miss Langdon interrupted him. "Paula is the most normal, wholesome, and charming of creatures!"

"She married Denbeigh, however," returned Robinson, and then regretted having said it.

"I wonder if you liked him?" Robinson made no answer, and she hurried on, as if she had not expected one. "I was rather surprised at luncheon to hear papa speak of him so freely. He is generally most reticent in regard to him; he does not even like to hear him mentioned."

"The Bishop was not expansive as it was."

"I don't wish to gossip, but I have an impression that papa was much dissatisfied with Mr. Denbeigh before he left here."

"Mr. Denbeigh shared the same impression. Not that he ever said much, either. I really know nothing about it."

"Neither do I; but—when Mr. Denbeigh's 'Tranquil Storms' was published—papa alluded to it this morning—I saw it on the study table and thought that I would read it. As I was very busy I forgot it until a few days later, when I was passing one of the barrels of rubbish that had been set out at the corner of the hedge for the college ashman to collect—" she lowered her voice—"there, on top, was 'Tranquil Storms'!"

Robinson laughed out. "Your father is a delightful man," he said, and laughed again.

"Of course I bought the book later—I have all of Denbeigh's works."

"You read them?"

Something in Robinson's voice made her look up. "One must read them in self-defence. Everybody talks of them."

He drew a breath of relief. "Then you do not like them?"

"Have I said that? One must be very sure of one's self, and I think a little conceited, to be able to make a statement of that kind. Still, I confess that although I recognize Denbeigh's power he is not always convincing, in spite of something very great in the things he writes."

"Emerson and Maeterlinck are good men."

"But 'Tranquil Storms' has a certain lofty, splendid faith, and those others——"

Robinson, with sudden impatience, rose and went toward a table on the other side of the room, where he took one or two small silver antiques in his hand and examined them closely. "I am not altogether orthodox in regard to Denbeigh," he said, with his head bent.

"Neither am I; with all his literary charm, he lacks—what does he lack?"

"Well, pretty nearly everything, so far as I am concerned."

"You do dislike him! Why did you cease to be his friend?"

"His friend? Was I ever his friend?"

"He dedicated his most famous book to you!"

"He knew it would annoy me. Denbeigh was a queer character."

"How can you speak so! Between Denbeigh and immortality there was but the breadth of a shadow——"

"Yes; the shadow of the gentlemen I mentioned a few moments ago, along with other shadows equally distinguished. Nobody can accuse Denbeigh of bad taste!"

"You quarrelled with him!" exclaimed Miss Langdon reproachfully. "It grieves me to think that you would let so valuable an opportunity for influence slip by unheeded."

"On my word of honor, I do assure you that I had no influence with Denbeigh in any way whatever!"

"And you dropped him without a single regret?"

"How could I drop what I never took up?" said Robinson hardily.

"Can you bear to let a soul drift by you in that way?"

"Had Denbeigh a soul! Really, you go too far!"

"Could he write as he did without? From what else did his inspiration come?"

Robinson pretended to consider. "His chief inspiration was derived from an empty purse; after that—he took his goods wherever he found them; but surely it isn't necessary for me to like Denbeigh! There is spinach; I am not fond of it, no reproach to the spinach, a nice, respectable, if somewhat unsightly vegetable." He came and stood by her side, looking down at her smilingly. "I shall have to say good-by now; I have already been here an unconscionable length of time."

Miss Langdon sat a long time after he had gone, thinking. The visit had been unsatisfactory, surprising, disquieting. For a few moments she had felt as if she had regained her former sway; but her hold had slipped. "It was Denbeigh," she murmured, and looked about her shivering. Everything was changed. The wind was blowing

sharply outside and a hard, clear streak of sunlight fell across the room, bringing out a dreary dust on all its polished surfaces.

"Miss Sylvia?"

She turned, to find Sarah's disapproving face in the doorway. Sarah always used to look so when Robinson had been there; it was most irritating! "What do you want, Sarah?"

"Mr. Bennie Maxwell asked me to let him know when you would be at leisure. I told him that I thought you would probably be tired out and needing your nap as soon as the gentleman in here was gone."

"I am going up to change my gown. You may bring the tea and tell Mr. Maxwell I will see him as soon as he is at liberty.—And, Sarah, do dust this untidy room!"

When Miss Langdon came downstairs she found Bennie standing in front of the drawing-room fire warming his hands. "It is a most changeable climate," he said. "It feels like winter now, and this morning we were all uncomfortable with the heat and the mugginess. Are you sure you wanted me to come in to tea?" He smiled at her delightfully. "I told Sarah that I was dying of hunger; I suppose that's the reason she has brought these little hot biscuits."

Sarah, from behind Miss Langdon's back, gave him a fleeting grin. When Bennie was a baby

she had been his nurse, and however grim and forbidding she might be to Miss Langdon, with whom she had lived for nearly twenty years, for Bennie Maxwell—whom she had taken care of but two—she always had a warm spot in her heart, and a queer, embarrassed smile upon her lips.

"How does it go?" said Miss Langdon.

"The secretaryship? It's a cinch, I tell you, a regular cinch!"

"What! working from nine in the morning until five in the afternoon, and often much longer?"

"I'll tell you something"—Bennie leaned over confidentially—"ever since I was a little chap I have adored your father. He has always been the greatest man in the world to me, and now that I see him every day I feel as if I had been suddenly brought into the inside workings of events. He is so big! He trusts a fellow so immensely—and then, in the afternoons, I come in to tea," he concluded guilelessly.

"You did that before. Are there no drawbacks, then?"

"None; of course, trying as I am to pass my exams at the Medical School, I am working pretty hard, but that will be over in a week or two, and then I shall have a delightful summer."

"O Bennie, you must be conscious of all you have given up!"

"It doesn't do to think too much of the things

you are giving up, and, anyhow, I can wait a year or two longer before I settle in my profession."

"It is fortunate that you do not wish to marry. In that case, you might be less philosophical."

"Yes?"

"I have always been a little afraid"—as she spoke something within warned her that she had better refrain; but she went on—"I have always been a little afraid that you had set your heart on Margaret Fanshawe."

Bennie's face became totally expressionless. "Margaret is about the best girl there is," he said, in a friendly tone.

"She is a dear girl! A dear, splendid, honest, straightforward girl."

Bennie's hard look softened.

"But—she is one of the most thoroughly practical people I ever knew."

"So am I."

"Not quite, Bennie; you have a great deal of the artist about you. It is that which has made you and me so friendly."

"Artistic temperament?" grinned Bennie.

"Yes, you have it; but Margaret—hasn't a bit, not a bit!"

"Margaret," said Bennie, leaning back and crossing his knees, "doesn't always show what she is thinking about. I wonder if you know her very well?"

"I know all the girls. Of course I wouldn't for the world interfere with your friendship with Margaret——"

"Oh, you couldn't!"

"But your temperament and hers——"

"But you said Margaret hadn't any." Bennie helped himself to another biscuit. "And I didn't know that I had, either, but if you think so," he laughed at her affectionately, "I am willing to own up. Still, I am glad you made an exception of Margaret. She would be almost as much insulted to be told she had a temperament as if you had told her that she had the gout."

"That shows precisely where she is lacking."

"And how do you like the new man? I saw him going out a few minutes ago. He has temperament enough."

"What makes you think that?" Miss Langdon was annoyed.

"You can tell by the look of his back," said Bennie, and he wandered off into a description of backs in general, and temperaments in particular, for five or ten minutes more, until he felt that it was time to leave.

Miss Langdon sat, miserable, over the tea-things. It may have been the lost nap, or perhaps a sense of weakened influence with Robinson, something had awakened in her a spirit of restlessness and grasping; and the sight of Bennie's happy, brave

face made her feel that she could not risk losing him, also, out of her life. He belonged to her; she understood and helped him. With Margaret Fanshawe he only played and was happy. There was nothing stable in the affection of children like that; these things, at their age, were always superficial; she had been twenty-one herself. "Superficial!" She repeated it aloud, as if to fling it in the face of the sickening heartache and uncertainty that had taken possession of her.

"And Denbeigh cared for him! Louise Gates told me so. Do all ties bind him as lightly as that? He has forgotten—" In her loneliness she was startled to find that she was whispering to herself, and she closed her lips fast, wondering at her own misery.

"One is always depressed at this hour in the afternoon," she explained to herself, and for a moment felt relieved; but an infinitesimal fear lest she had been treacherous to Margaret Fanshawe now began gnawing at her conscience. Had she been jealous? No; she could not bear to see Bennie Maxwell's future in jeopardy; Bennie was the only one of the young people who had not deserted her. She had had many favorites. In Harry Cogswell's childhood no day for him was completely happy without a visit to his aunt. Margaret, too, had sat at her feet and worshipped. Sylvia had spent weeks at her grandfather's house, and within

a few years Mrs. Denbeigh's niece, little Annchen Gates, had been constantly in Miss Langdon's society, reading with her, studying, playing the violin to her, passionately devoted, as all the rest had been. And like them, also, she had fallen away, in precipitate rebellion against bonds of which —up to the last moment—she had seemed unconscious. Only Bennie had remained faithful—and only Margaret true!

The others had chafed openly; but Margaret, although she had gone her way, had said no word.

## CHAPTER VI

ROBINSON had left Miss Langdon full of self-reproach. Denbeigh, for him, was one of those sore subjects that a man cannot let alone even when he knows how much it will hurt to handle it. The insolent contempt which Denbeigh and his followers professed for the outside world —and especially for the general public, with whom he was immensely popular—had always irritated Robinson; but this minor annoyance had been more or less allayed since his return to Great Dulwich, by his finding there a strong opposition to the popular idol. Coldston had received, reverently, Denbeigh's gospel of "fragrance and sound"; but in Great Dulwich no official knee had, as yet, been bowed in Denbeigh's temple. His followers danced before his image and with knives and lancets cut themselves, after their manner, but Great Dulwich stood by and jeered. No degree had been bestowed upon him in his lifetime, and after his death no memorial service was celebrated in the college church, and the waves of the sea of Great Dulwich indifference bade fair to close over him, leaving no sign; but still his priests—instant in

their efforts to force a recognition—continued to sound his praises on cymbals of brass, and frantically to gyrate before his shrine.

To be able, judiciously and impartially, to explode the Denbeigh bubble would have given Robinson the greatest pleasure in life; but the memory of the veiled dedication in "Tranquil Storms" always hampered his freedom of expression, and on those infrequent occasions when he forgot this, it was almost invariably thrown in his face with an accusation of treachery or ingratitude along with it.

When he came now into the clearer air and found that the rain had stopped, he made up his mind to spend the rest of the afternoon out of doors. On leaving the park he turned and went up the road, which was there bordered by wide spaces of turf, with narrower paths on either side of the principal driveway for foot passengers. He had not gone far when he heard a horn blowing behind him. It was the public coach, crowded with young people on their way to the golf links.

"Hello!" cried Harry Cogswell, from the top, and Tom Bent and Sylvia nodded to him with friendly familiarity. They were all so gay, so healthy, and care-free, that Robinson wished he might be twenty-one again himself. Still he was not altogether oblivious of the advantages of being thirty-nine, and trudged on across a bridge toward

the open country on the other side of the river. Gradually his cheerfulness returned, and he began to think of his talk with Miss Langdon with a sense of emancipation. They were equals at last! He had even been able to differ with her comfortably. He laughed tenderly to himself to think how, in all those eighteen years, she had dominated his memory. What an intellectual monster he had created, in the place of this charming woman, who hesitated to confess to him that she liked Denbeigh! Denbeigh, forsooth! Formerly she shone above him, at an unattainable height, and he had tried to draw himself up to her level; poetic as was the thought, to encounter the fact would have been disconcerting; he was glad to be spared. Hitherto he had occupied the position of a mendicant; now he was happier in the knowledge that he was able to give.

There was a small cottage in the park; he remembered it well; some one had told him that the Caldwells were moving out of it. He had always liked that cottage, and he swung along, through the mud, dreaming of its old-fashioned rooms and mentally filling them with quaint and beautiful furnishings.

The motion and the cool air and cheerful thought had brought a color to his face, and when he turned, on hearing a voice behind him, he looked alert and fresh.

"Come back, or Aunt Paula's horses will be mired trying to catch up with you!" It was Mrs. Denbeigh and her niece Annchen Gates.

Robinson came to the side of the carriage, his hat in his hand. "I didn't know how far I had been walking," he said, looking up at them.

Mrs. Denbeigh's eyes wandered toward a field of young wheat at the side of the road; there was a trace of embarrassment in her manner, but Annchen put her hand upon the door of the carriage as if to open it. "Let us take you home," she said impulsively.

"I am too muddy!"

"Nobody minds! Aunt Paula, make him come."

Mrs. Denbeigh's eyes returned to Robinson's face. "Do get in," she said.

Robinson still hesitated, but Mrs. Denbeigh, a little impatiently, repeated her invitation. Annchen, who was on the side nearest him, flung open the carriage door. "How funny you are!" she exclaimed. "One would fancy you thought we didn't want you."

To avoid further embarrassment Robinson got in, and as he was passing Annchen he somewhat awkwardly knocked a book that she was holding out of her hand. He stooped to pick it up; as he did so he heard an exclamation of annoyance from Mrs. Denbeigh. The book was Denbeigh's

"Tranquil Storms." He returned it to Annchen, who took it with a half-humorous, half-mutinous look, and having regained it, opened it and began to read.

"Annchen!" said her aunt.

"Annchen, indeed!" echoed Robinson, laughing softly.

The young girl drew down a pair of heavy eyebrows in a sullen frown.

"You know you are not reading," said Robinson, when the carriage had started.

Annchen looked up at him; the faintest fleeting glimpse of her front teeth in a half smile showed that she understood. There was something boyish and yet, at the same time, fine and delicate in her whole carriage and expression.

"I remember your doing that," Robinson went on, "before you knew how to read. You used then to hold your book upside down; it was a primitive method of achieving privacy. I am willing, however, to agree not to interrupt the course of your thoughts, and it will save you the trouble of reading your uncle's book."

Involuntarily Mrs. Denbeigh shot him a warning glance.

"Mr. Denbeigh was not my uncle," said Annchen; "and it is absolutely necessary that I should read his book. I am preparing for the concert this evening."

Robinson smiled, unoffended, and paid her no further attention.

"It is a relief to meet some one who understands Annchen," said Mrs. Denbeigh.

"It is a relief," Annchen shot forth, "to meet the only person who does!"

Robinson did not acknowledge this tribute by any change of expression. For the rest of the drive home he talked with Mrs. Denbeigh, and Annchen read on until they reached the entrance of Bent Hall, when Robinson got out of the carriage.

"I am coming up to see you, some time," said Annchen, leaning back in her seat to look upward at the Tower.

"When?" asked Robinson cordially. "I would invite you to come to-morrow, but I shall be busy in the afternoon—there is a faculty meeting. What do you think of the day after, Mrs. Denbeigh? Say about half-past four."

Annchen's eyes lighted. "I am sure you have nothing to do that day, Aunt Paula. I shall bring my violin," she added, turning to Robinson.

"That will be delightful," said Robinson. "I am coming to hear you this evening, you know."

Annchen's black eyebrows drew together again. "To-night? You mustn't come to-night! Can't you see that you don't fit in?" She held out her book to him in corroboration.

"My dear Annchen!"

"But I don't want him to-night; I have been telling him so ever since we first saw him. That is why I asked him to drive back with us. You needn't pretend not to understand, Robin. I can't have you hear me play this evening for the first time. Don't come!" She leaned over the side of the carriage coaxingly, and smiled down at him. "Do let me play to you, first, in your Tower, Robin—dear Robin!"

"Really, Annchen," Mrs. Denbeigh remonstrated.

"I always called him Robin," said Annchen mutinously; "and he is dear!"

"You seem to have forgotten that you have grown up."

"I never shall be grown up for Robin—and you will not come to-night?"

"What does Mrs. Denbeigh say?"

"If you come there will be no concert!" said Annchen. "I shall not play!"

Robinson's eyes smilingly questioned Mrs. Denbeigh. "She is capable of anything!" he said.

"Do I not know?" she answered. "Stay away, I beg of you!"

"And day after to-morrow?"

"We shall come with pleasure," said Mrs. Denbeigh. "Drive home, Thomas."

Robinson stepped back and the carriage rolled away. Annchen looked at her aunt a moment, roguishly, and then said, "Thank you."

"You left me no choice," said Mrs. Denbeigh coldly.

## CHAPTER VII

BENNIE MAXWELL did not feel inclined to join the group of young people at the golf links when he left Miss Langdon. He was depressed; Miss Langdon had been too long his guide in matters of opinion for him lightly to set her judgment aside. "Do I care what she thinks of Margaret?" he thought to himself rebelliously. Nevertheless his heart was torn, and more for the sake of the older than for the younger woman. The delicate barrier that had hung between him and Miss Langdon had never been blown upon by any breath of turbulent feeling; it was no more than a veil of gauze, but this afternoon something had shaken all its filmy surface, and, through it, his goddess had seemed distorted. Bennie snapped his stick at some dandelion heads in the grass at the side of the path, and muttered to himself that Miss Langdon had been "different."

When he reached the gates of the park, he looked undecidedly up and down the road. He did not wish to see Margaret after he had heard her name taken in vain, so he strode moodily across and mounted the steps of his father's house. Although

within the city limits, the college and the settlement that surrounded it seemed to be in the country; and the narrow brick block opposite the park gates stood out alone in a neighborhood of larger places and green fields. Professor Maxwell's house was in the end of the block toward the city, and a side entrance opened on a large garden. Bennie went in and listened a moment in the hall; the whir of a sewing-machine came from above, and he ran upstairs to find his mother.

Mrs. Maxwell looked up at him and smiled, and then bent her head again over a dress of muslin and lace that was passing steadily under the dancing needle.

"What is this?" said Bennie.

"It is Nellie's gown for this evening. Don't pull it, Bennie; you will stop it and break the thread."

Bennie dropped the end of the ruffle and leaned back, watching his mother until she had finished. "Are you going out to the Gates place?" she said.

"I suppose so."

"Your father doesn't feel well enough to go. He grows more and more tired every day. It is really very alarming, Bennie."

"He is overworked. Do you know what you must do next year? You must take him away somewhere."

"It is impossible; we can't afford it, dear."

"We must."

"Even if we had money enough, he would be unwilling to go. Ned—needs looking after."

"Father must stop; absolutely must! If he doesn't—" He did not conclude his sentence.

"You can't mean that he really is ill, Bennie. You boys, when you begin to study medicine, see alarming symptoms in every eyewink."

"I am not making any mistake when I say that my father ought to stop work."

She glanced at him quickly. Of late Bennie had begun saying "my father" with a tender inflection, as if he never spoke of him without some special feeling of love and reverence. "If we only had enough to live on for a year or two, he might rest!" she sighed.

"If we had no father," said Bennie, with difficulty, "we should be compelled to live upon whatever we could scrape together."

"So I have told him, but he will not stop."

"Can't you see? Don't you understand, mamma? He is holding on, for all our sakes, like a wounded pilot bringing his ship to port—to save us—" The young man choked and stopped.

Mrs. Maxwell tried to sew on steadily; the white gown was, after all, her ship that she was bringing into port. "This must be ready in time for Nellie," she said, looking up at him piteously.

Bennie took out his handkerchief, bent forward,

and wiped the tears from her eyes with it. "It may not be so bad. I am not a doctor—I may be mistaken."

Mrs. Maxwell took her work from the machine and threading her needle began to finish it by hand. "This will be done in a minute—wait!" She spoke imperiously, as Bennie made a motion to leave the room.

He watched the color burning in two bright spots on her cheeks; her eyes were shining, and she sewed with feverish energy; but every stitch went, accurately, daintily, to its appointed place. "Let Nellie wear something else; papa is not the only one that works too hard."

"Hush, I must fasten on this bow!" She finished, rose, and threw her work upon the bed. There was passion in the gesture, yet control, lest any carelessness should spoil the crisp freshness of the dress. "You are not mistaken," she said in a low voice; "but what are we to do? What are we to do? I have tried my best. I have worked and managed and slaved; no, not slaved—never slaved!—because I have loved everything I have done. It has been a joy to entertain to our last limit of possibility; to keep you children looking sweet and the house bright; a joy not to let the family slip from its place in the world. I should not have a word of complaint to utter if I had succeeded; but I have not, I have failed, and failed in

the chief thing I worked for—your father, Bennie, oh, your father! It has all been for him. When we first began I stretched every resource to keep up, and then the Bishop put Mr. Fanshawe in the position your father ought to have had, because he thought that it was better for the college that the Dean should be rich enough to be able to entertain handsomely. You need not shake your head, Bennie. Mrs. Fanshawe's money tipped the balance. I know Edward Langdon, and my father knew him before me. He is a hard, hard man!"

"Indeed he is not; he has put help in our way in the only form in which we could accept it!"

"And he despises us that we need it so much. Oh, if I were only like Mrs. Caldwell!—how I should hate it—but if I were, your father would have more leisure; but I can't be like her. I never could. I have tried, Bennie, indeed I have tried! I seem to know life on a wrong plane; I am economical and saving enough on my own plane, but on this plane I can't get along. Oh, you thought I didn't recognize it because I have laughed and been gay! That is my instinct. I am like an old mother-bird fluttering from my nest to draw the hunter from my young and from my mate—my wounded mate. I have pretended that your father hated society. I have tried to hide his breaking health from the Bishop—from the trustees—from every one——"

She was so tender, so sweet, so frail, and so desperate. Bennie set his teeth. "Do you suppose that I took this position with the Bishop for nothing?" he said. "Don't worry! We'll make papa give up those schools in the city at once. Perhaps a partial rest is all he needs."

"He needs more than that. He needs to stop short. He is exhausted. He has to lie down two or three times a day—and, Bennie—he has gone to see Dr. Saltus; he went this afternoon."

"Saltus?" murmured Bennie. "Professor Moncrieff's man?"

She nodded. "He should be back by now."

"He is back. I heard him moving about in the study when I came in."

Mrs. Maxwell turned away. Bennie could see the oval of her cheek, snow white. "Why doesn't he come upstairs?" she whispered. "What has the doctor said? Go down to him, quickly; pretend you don't know anything."

"Wouldn't he rather have you?"

"No, he has tried to hide it from me. Go, Bennie. Don't let him suspect that we are frightened; be cheerful."

Bennie went slowly down to the study and opened the door. Mr. Maxwell was standing with his back to the room looking out of the window at the garden. Bennie waited a moment, undecided. "Father, I came in to—to——"

His father turned about, put his hands on his shoulders, and then, drawing him slightly forward, he kissed him.

With a little groan Bennie turned away and ran upstairs to his own room.

## CHAPTER VIII

THE next morning as Robinson was walking through the park he met Annchen Gates going toward the Bishop's with a bunch of rhodora in her hands. "Oh," she said, "I am so glad to see you—I wrote to you yesterday evening, and I was afraid that I should not get an answer in time for to-morrow. Do you mind if I ask one or two people to come up to the Tower with us?"

"Of course not, still—" showing a little surprise.

"You see, Aunt Paula is so young and pretty that mamma must come; and if mamma is there, we've got to have some other people, or I shall see nothing of you."

"It is not quite clear; but I think I understand."

"It is perfectly clear! And—would you mind having Bennie and Margaret? And then, there is that George D'Orsey, he always wants to monopolize Aunt Paula; but mamma will want to talk to him—and, of course, that will settle itself."

"I shall be very glad to see any one you care to ask. What a big bunch of rhodora!"

"It is for Cousin Sylvia Langdon; she is fond of it. It grows in a swampy place in our grounds. I always bring her some every spring. There is more than usual this year."

"What a strange color!"

"Hideous."

"I wonder"—Robinson looked pleased, as if struck by a happy thought—"if Miss Langdon wouldn't like to come up to the Tower to-morrow afternoon?"

"Then you may as well have Sylvia and Harry."

Robinson did not see the sequence, but he assented.

"And, of course, when Sylvia's coming, you must ask Tom Bent. If it is going to be a function, we might just as well have them all."

"But do you care to play before so many?"

"I shall not play for them; I am going to play for you—but I must give Cousin Sylvia her rhodora. She will clasp her hands and weep a few pearly tears when she sees it."

"Annchen!"

"Then she will give a little scream of joy—a sort of wail of ecstasy. Come with me and see; do, it is well worth the bother. After that she sends for the vases, and worships each separate branch as she puts it in them. She has one scarlet vase that she particularly enjoys."

"I don't believe it!"

"And she says little bits of Emerson and little bits of Denbeigh. Very often, you know, you can't tell them apart—at least, you can tell Emerson apart but not Denbeigh. I see, you don't want to come. Good-by. If you go over there this afternoon look about for that scarlet vase. I think she imagines it looks like a red bird!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort. Why do you take her the things if you are not fond of her?"

"But I am; so fond of her that it enrages me beyond expression to have her like this"—she waved her bunch of rhodora—"exquisite, far-away, frail, and a little off-color."

"If I thought you meant that, Annchen, I should be seriously displeased. There is a certain insincerity about it that is in shocking bad taste, to say the least."

"You are mistaken. I am most sincere; it is the only way in which mamma allows me to be sincere—and I don't wish to be interfered with. If you say much more I shall give the rhodora to you."

"*Gott bewahr!*" said Robinson, and hurried away.

He was somewhat alarmed at the size of Annchen's proposed festivity, and the next day found him extremely nervous. At the last moment he began to make his preparations. He pushed the chairs about in his rooms, carried rugs and pillows

back and forth, undecidedly, to and from the upper Tower, and not until he had moved all of his possessions, and then returned them again to their old places, did he declare himself ready to go down to the entrance to meet his guests.

Miss Langdon was late and the others went up the stairs, leaving Robinson and Annchen to wait for her.

"I knew she'd come," whispered Annchen, as they watched her crossing the grass between the Deanery hedge and the Tower. "I wish she hadn't such heavenly hair."

"But why?"

"It should be yellow, and worn in a giggly, girly pigtail down her back."

"I do not understand." Robinson was at last angry.

"I know you don't; it grieves me to see your density. You have developed"—she turned her head toward him and whispered fiercely, as Miss Langdon was coming nearer—"into a common, ordinarily intelligent—professor. Yes, a professor!"

Robinson felt his anger evaporating in amusement. "Is it so bad as that?" he murmured, going forward to meet Miss Langdon.

She climbed the stairs slowly, refusing his offered arm; but when they reached the room she was pale and a little out of breath. Annchen manœuvred

her skilfully into the window-seat where were her mother and D'Orsey, and went to join the younger people who were helping Robinson to prepare tea.

It was not early when Annchen began to play; the sun was low, shining in at the western window. She stood, lighted up by the pinkish glow, and as she bent her strong black brows in the intensity of her attention, the childish look died out of her face. The effort of playing in no way distorted her features, yet it made her ugly—a heavenly, impersonal ugliness. She looked like some tall young archangel, untouched by things of earth.

When she put down her bow at the end, no one spoke. She turned to gather her music together, bending toward Robinson, who had played her accompaniment.

"You have it," he said.

"Yes, I know that I have."

"It is a pity; you will be compelled to pay for it dearly, some day."

"I am paying for it now; I have always paid for it. It is rather expensive." She sighed.

"Yes, it is rather expensive."

"But it is worth the price!"

"I don't know about that," said Robinson doubtfully; "nothing is worth the price nowadays, everything has gone up so—even little girls' noses.

They turned them heavenward at common people: at poor professors——"

Annchen laughed. "You know I never meant it!"

"Let us go upstairs to the upper Tower, Annchen," said Harry Cogswell, joining them.

Annchen started forward with alacrity; but hesitated as Harry turned and included Margaret in his invitation.

"Will you come, too, Sylvia?" said Tom Bent with sudden interest. "The view up there is magnificent."

Annchen's brows drew together. "Is everybody coming?" she said discontentedly to Margaret Fanshawe.

"Of course we are! That is what we are here for." Margaret glanced smilingly at Bennie; but Miss Langdon kept on talking to him eagerly, heedless of his wistful look at the retreating party.

They found that Robinson had left a sufficient amount of furniture and rugs in the Tower to make it attractive, and when they reached the top Sylvia Cogswell threw herself into a long steamer-chair and looked up at the clouds.

"You can't see over the balustrade," said Tom Bent, seating himself on the stone coping.

"The sky is good enough for me. Margie, come here and tell us what you do every day in that horrid hospital."

"It is better than a map!" cried Harry, wandering from one side of the Tower to the other. "See those fruit trees in blossom out on the Milford Farm, Margaret. Very late, aren't they?" He looked toward Margaret; but Margaret was talking busily with Sylvia and Tom Bent and did not seem to hear. "Isn't it late?" he said, with a note of disappointment in his voice, turning to Annchen, who was leaning with her elbows on the balustrade.

"I suppose it is," she answered sulkily.

"It's a ripping fine evening for the view!"

"You are not seeing a thing," said Annchen crossly, "not a thing!"

"I thought I was."

"That's the trouble with you, you think you see a lot, but you don't. You will find that out some day and wish you had paid better attention to what is going on around you."

"What, for example?" Harry leaned his elbows on the coping by Annchen's side, and then, not liking the feeling of the rough stones, brushed off a little dust that had gathered on his coat, and flung himself sidewise into a chair near by. "What don't I see?" he asked, leaning back and looking up at her.

"Well, the view, for example."

"I can tell you everything—the whole round—beginning with the lighthouse; and I can name every mountain——"

"For Heaven's sake, don't do it!"

"Annchen, what is the matter with you this evening? In fact, what is the matter with you altogether? You haven't been a bit like yourself lately."

"There is nothing the matter—why should there be anything?"

"All right; but if there is nothing the matter, why be grouchy?"

"Oh—everybody is bent on making a fool of himself!"

"For example?"

"Robin, to begin with. Oh—I forgot!" Annchen flushed very red.

"Robinson! What is he making a fool of himself about?"

"Never mind; if you don't see, there is no need to point it out."

"Very well, who else is there?" Annchen's strictures on her fellow-men had always amused Harry.

"You."

"And just how am I doing it?"

"Not to mention such minor matters as your wasting your time and throwing away all your opportunities——"

"I keep all the opportunities I really need, thank you."

Annchen bent toward him. "You are perfectly

stupid about Bennie and Margaret!" she said, in a lower tone. "You are helping all you can to set things wrong—something has come over Bennie——"

"I should think it had!" said Harry under his breath.

"Somebody has been making mischief between those two, and here are you, always keeping them apart—never giving them a chance to explain."

"When have I kept them apart?"

"You persistently kept them apart at our house night before last."

Harry's face flushed. "What if I am interested in"—he glanced cautiously toward the other side of the Tower—"a certain person, myself?"

"You have no business to be. Those two have always been friends and—he hasn't had very much happiness lately. You have no right to go in at all, and I will not have you making him unhappy!"

"All right, don't look then. Anything else?"

Annchen vaulted lightly to the stone coping and turned her attention wholly to the sunset. She sat there, leaning against the side of one of the arches, sulky and imperious, the color bright in her cheeks, and her black eyebrows drawn together in the usual scowl.

"Annchen," said Harry gently, after watching her a moment or two, "do you want to do some-

thing for me? It is a small thing, but it would truly give me a great deal of pleasure."

Annchen's dark blue eyes turned toward him disdainfully.

"I should like for the space of just about one minute"—he drew out his watch—"only one little minute by the watch—anything further would be cruel—but if for one minute you could turn your lovely brow upon me divested of that enormous scowl it would give me something to think of when I am old; something that probably no one else in the world will ever again have an opportunity of observing."

Annchen's lip quivered in a reluctant smile.

"One, two," began Harry; "the seconds are flying——"

"Do I really do it so dreadfully?"

"Thirty-six, thirty-seven," counted Harry under his breath, his eyes fixed upon her face; "I hardly dare look at my watch, for fear of losing something of this resplendent phenomenon."

"It's just a trick," said Annchen, but the scowl did not return. "I have so many things to worry me——"

"Take care! Forty-two, forty-three, forty-four, ah—too bad!"

Suddenly Annchen's brow had become overcast. Harry turned to look; Miss Langdon's head was appearing over the trap-door.

"Good gracious! What has Aunt Sylvia done?"

"She has never done anything," snapped Annchen, getting down from her perch. "Jump up, Harry, and put the pillows back in that chair!"

Annchen hurried forward and gave Miss Langdon her hand. The girl's quick eyes took in the older woman's pale face and panting breath; she looked below and saw her mother following with Bennie.

"Come over here, Aunt Sylvia," said Harry.

Annchen stayed behind. "Give me your vinaigrette, quick, mamma! and don't say anything!"

Mrs. Gates pressed the vinaigrette into Annchen's hand, and in another moment Miss Langdon, who was lying back with her eyes closed, felt the sharp sting of ammonia under her nostrils. She sat up under the shock of it. "Please take that away," she said; "it is very disagreeable to me; you know I never use it."

"I was sure that you would hate to spoil everything and draw attention to yourself," said Annchen shortly.

"Oh, Miss Annchen," said D'Orsey's voice behind them, "a scene like this should inspire you to play even more poetically than you did a few minutes ago!"

"My name is Ann," said Annchen; "I have told you that frequently. A—double 'n'!"

Harry, who had put his elbows on the balustrade again, looked off toward the sunset, and whistled softly to himself. For a moment D'Orsey was silent. "Is this not worth the exertion, Miss Langdon?" he said then. "The sunset is superb—" He had not noticed that from the chair where she was sitting she could not see. "If we only got this kind of thing oftener in our lives, how much saner our thoughts would be, how much clearer our judgment! What do you think of it, Miss Ann without the 'e'?" He turned toward Annchen, who shrugged her shoulders.

"But we do get this kind of thing, more or less, in our lives every day," said Miss Langdon. "If we choose, we may always have something to lift us above the earth. Communion with nature is always open to us. 'I cannot make any decision without first asking the opinion of my oak-tree,' as Denbeigh says."

"I see what you so beautifully mean."

Harry turned his head a little and winked at Annchen, who had taken her place again on the parapet. D'Orsey, while he could not see him, suspected him. "A fellow can't get on without his daily ride or his golf, you know." He addressed Harry directly, with a sudden change of tone.

"I don't know about that—lots of fellows do." Harry stammered and hesitated. "There is Professor Maxwell, he never plays golf, nor rides;

he would laugh at you if you suggested that he had time to waste on such things; but I'd like you to find a man of—of 'saner thought.' He really is lifted above the earth, Aunt Sylvia. While, on the other hand, there is——"

"Mr. D'Orsey," said Annchen.

"I beg your pardon, Annchen, but I wasn't going to say Mr. D'Orsey at all! I wouldn't be so rude. I meant"—he lowered his voice carefully —"Tom Bent over there. There is nobody who loves an out-door life more than he does, but—well—you wouldn't exactly call him Nature's child, now would you, Aunt Sylvia?"

Miss Langdon smiled. She knew Tom Bent very well.

"I think perhaps Harry here," said D'Orsey, lowering his voice and nodding at Harry kindly, "is deceived by a certain worldly exterior that really doesn't prevent Bent's being a wonderful example of what I say. A wholesome out-door life has kept him young, almost boyish. His tastes are simple and his manner direct and open, like the sea, or the trees, because, like them, he has nothing to conceal."

D'Orsey was stooping over Miss Langdon's chair, in order that what he was saying might not reach the ears of the group on the other side of the Tower; he missed, therefore, seeing Annchen and Harry consult each other's eyes for one amazed

instant and then smile at each other derisively as they moved quietly away to a more secluded corner.

"Corking joke," Harry whispered. "D'Orsey thinks he's the only man of the world in it. He is prepared to pull the wool over Tom's eyes to any extent; he tries it every once in a while—about Silly."

"Donkey!"

"Rather."

"Oh, don't be so English! You picked it up at that old boarding-school——"

"Annchen, I've told you again and again not to call Eton a boarding-school! And, as for being English, what are you yourself? What with English nurses and English governesses you're not American in anything—unless it is your manners!"

Annchen's eyes filled with tears.

"I don't mean to be disagreeable," said Harry soberly—"but what is the sense of putting on all this roughness? It's horrid."

"I thought that you, at least, would understand. It isn't that I mean to be rude; it is only a relief not to mind whether I am or not. I have to live by so many rules and maxims—Denbeigh here and Denbeigh there—I must take it out of somebody, Harry."

"All right," said Harry sympathetically, "take it out of me, or Robinson, as much as you choose—but"—he looked over his shoulder and the two

drew a little farther away—"be careful about D'Orsey. These Coldston people, you know, are not exactly—" The two young heads drew together confidentially and their voices sank to a whisper.

## CHAPTER IX

WHEN his other guests had left the study for the upper Tower, Robinson was surprised to see that Mrs. Denbeigh did not intend to go with them. She was standing by a low bookcase, absorbed in the examination of a small bronze; for a moment he thought she had not noticed that the others were gone, and he stood waiting for her by the door.

"Why do you refuse to accept the bronze my husband left you in his will?" she asked abruptly. "This one is a very inferior copy of the same subject."

"I hoped that I had made all that clear to Mrs. Gates," said Robinson.

"I think you did—but it is not clear to me." She walked slowly back to the western window and sat down on the window-seat. Robinson followed her and stood leaning against the casing opposite her.

"The bronze was given to your husband in payment of a debt—a just debt——"

"If you mean your share of the rent of his apart-

ment—the bronze was worth many times what that came to."

"Mr. Denbeigh did not think so," interrupted Robinson quietly.

She looked out of the window, turning her head slowly as her glance swept the horizon. Robinson could see that she was weighing carefully what she had next to say; at last her eyes met his. "He knew that you did not like him."

Robinson started forward. "For that matter, he did not like——"

"Do not say it! You may be sorry!"

"But we were not even on the footing of liking or disliking!"

"I have something to say to you from him. He gave me a message before he died. I was to deliver it if I met you, not otherwise."

Robinson walked slowly the length of the room and back again. "Mrs. Denbeigh," he said, drawing a chair in front of her and sitting down, "must you deliver this message?"

"How profoundly you distrust him!" she cried.

"Forgive me!—I am waiting to hear whatever you may wish to tell me."

"He did not ask you to regard what I am about to say in the light of a request from a dying man; he said that he put no burden upon you, but at the same time he wished me to tell you that—in case I needed help with his biography—there was no

man living so well qualified as you are for the task."

"You surely misunderstood him!"

"He told me to assure you, if ever I met you, of his confidence in your loyalty and good faith."

"Mine?" Robinson's deep stupefaction rang out like the stroke of a bell. There was a moment's silence. "Mrs. Denbeigh"—he spoke with difficulty—"I cannot allow you to remain under so strange a misapprehension. What you tell me convinces me more than ever of the absolute impossibility of my understanding your husband. You must not ask this thing of me."

"I have not asked you. I don't mean to ask you! A few simple dates, a little precise information, at the utmost, are all that I should want from you. There are details of my husband's life in regard to which I am uncertain, and in writing this biography, although I need not be specific, I must be accurate."

"There is nothing in my connection with Mr. Denbeigh which could be of use to you."

"There is nothing in anybody's connection which is of use to me! In one sense of the word"—she hesitated—"there are very few men who have had so little, in a way, to conceal, and yet he was extremely reticent—secretive even."

"So far as that goes I am quite sure that Denbeigh had nothing to conceal which, so to speak,

demanded concealment. You must have known that." He added the last apologetically.

"Of course I knew it; but even if I had not, I should feel that I did not care to investigate; whatever he wished to hide shall remain unknown, even if it is a harmless thing! But you yourself must recognize that he frequently did himself injustice —he had a way of talking"—she leaned forward, resting her forehead against the upper sash of the open window, and seemed to be looking intently down at the tops of the trees—"a stranger would hardly know what lay behind his—way of talking. It caused him to be misunderstood; there have been one or two newspaper accounts——"

"I know."

Mrs. Denbeigh gave a short, impatient sigh. "I need help, and it is most difficult to find! Between the people who disliked Mr. Denbeigh extremely and the people in whose eyes he could do no wrong, there is no mean—those who were fond of him are curiously blind—and a biography is a trust, it is an obligation to see that the real man is given to the world."

"But is the real man ever given to the world? Has the world any right to expect it?"

"Mr. Denbeigh cared so much for the manner in which his life should be recorded; his instructions were so minute; many of them verbal."

"Ah!"

"And I promised that I would do it myself—if I could. Don't think that he was ungenerous! It was only—if I could. I was not to try beyond a certain point; but up to that point——"

"How long have you been trying?"

"Five years."

"Ever since his——"

"Ever since his death. If I had not feared to startle you, I would have said six years, because the work was begun before he died. A great many of the autobiographical notes of his boyhood were dictated to me."

"And the task grows no easier?"

"It has become, every month, more complicated, more involved; my mind is less clear——"

"But surely you have reached the limit. You find you cannot do it. Put it into other hands; D'Orsey's, for example."

She shook her head.

"Are you going to keep on with it forever then?"

"I do not know."

"Why not get help? Find a man thoroughly in sympathy with your—his—with Denbeigh's point of view, a man who will be able to look at the whole matter coolly and practically. D'Orsey, as I have said before."

There was a sound of voices at the head of the Tower stairs. "Paula, the carriage has been here half an hour," called Mrs. Gates. "We shall

make Mr. Robinson and Mr. D'Orsey miss their dinner; the commons closes at seven."

Mrs. Denbeigh rose, as if startled. "Good-by," she said, offering him her hand; "it has been a mistake. I hadn't thought it would be so disagreeable to you; yet I might have known—I beg——"

In an instant Robinson was all remorse. He had hurt her! "If I really can be of service——"

"Don't think of it any more." She hurried across the room to meet the others, who, without stopping, went on down to the entrance of the Tower where the carriages were waiting.

"Let us drive you home, Margaret," said Sylvia Cogswell.

Bennie, who was standing by Miss Langdon's side, looked at Margaret wistfully, but she followed Sylvia into the carriage, and then leaned forward to smile her good-by to Miss Langdon, including him, amiably, in a passing glance as the horses started.

He had not been near her the whole afternoon; he had seemed to avoid her at Annchen's musical; and, in examining the events of the last two weeks, she thought she could discover one defection after another since that morning when he had told her of the Bishop's offer. She had gone too far; and now her only preoccupation was to withdraw in such a way as to leave him convinced that she had never advanced.

## CHAPTER X

WHEN Robinson left the commons that evening, D'Orsey rose also and followed him into the great hall.

"Will you not come up?" said Robinson.

D'Orsey hesitated. "I shall not keep you long," he apologized; "but I wanted a word with you—in regard to—ah—Denbeigh."

Robinson started up the Tower stairs at a rapid pace, while D'Orsey followed, breathless. Hurrying by his own rooms, Robinson led the way ruthlessly on to the upper Tower, where his unfortunate guest walked about for a few minutes looking out over the country, and trying to conceal that he was practically speechless.

It was a starry night; all below was soft darkness, except for the occasional glimmer of a lamp through the trees; the two men lighted cigars and for a time sat in silence, enjoying the warmth of the summer-like evening and the feeling of pleasure that always comes with a sense of being very high in the air. Robinson was beginning to congratulate himself upon having managed to escape Denbeigh.

"You will find the people at the Gates place delightful acquaintances," said D'Orsey at last absently. "I myself should have a very different life here in Great Dulwich if Mrs. Gates had not admitted me to her friendship. I am helping her to edit the last work of our beloved Denbeigh."

Robinson sighed. "What is that?" he inquired indifferently.

"The name is, as yet, a secret, but I know that your interest in its success must be, at least, as great as mine, and I am sure that Mrs. Gates would not mind my mentioning—although you must have heard of—'The Higher Renunciation.' "

"They are not going to publish that!"

"You have seen it?"

"Not all of it."

"He left it, almost entirely finished, in Mrs. Gates's hands. The 'Life and Letters,' as you probably have been informed——"

"D'Orsey," said Robinson eagerly, "why don't you offer to help Mrs. Denbeigh with that biography?"

"Unfortunately, my acquaintance with Denbeigh has not proved a passport to the favor of his wife," said the other dryly. "But"—he sat up in his chair and spoke eagerly—"do you say this at her request?"

"No," said Robinson, going to the balustrade to knock off the ash of his cigar. "Mrs. Denbeigh

is a comparatively new acquaintance. Of course I knew Mrs. Gates in Florence."

"Mrs. Gates was the woman that Denbeigh should have married! Everybody was sure that it would come about when Gates died, but you know how Denbeigh felt about second marriages?"

"Yet, he in the end, married twice himself."

"Nobody believes in that early Coldston marriage now, Robinson! His famous essay on second marriages came out immediately after young Gates's death. There were people who insisted that Mrs. Gates's almost ostentatious grief over the loss of her husband was assumed in order to prevent its being said that Denbeigh had published the essay on purpose; but however that might be, they were both, in a way, committed. Still there is no telling what would have happened if Miss Gates hadn't appeared."

"Denbeigh was not a man who—I should have thought—would be attractive to a young woman." Robinson spoke with caution, but his tone was cool almost to the verge of contempt.

"Nobody understood it! Sometimes I felt that Miss Gates threw herself into the gap to save her sister-in-law from the gossip that at the time was raging; sometimes I have thought that she was really interested. Denbeigh could be delightful, he could be charming, and he did everything in his power to make himself pleasant to her. At any

rate, she married him, and before six months, she loathed him!"

"A bad business!" muttered Robinson, not removing his cigar from between his teeth. "Poor devil! I wonder if he deserved it."

"Nothing can be said against her, nothing in the world! Only—Denbeigh saw! She took care of him when he was ill. She was always about. She read to him. But at the time of his death there was something absolutely awful in the terrible beauty of her face; it was not sorrow—it was horror, and a savage relief."

Robinson made a sound of protest under his breath.

"As soon as she came back to this country she founded the Denbeigh professorship at Coldston. It must have taken every dollar that came to her from the royalties on Denbeigh's books. In fact, I have reason to know that she hasn't retained a penny that ever belonged to him. The 'collection'—you've seen it, of course?"

"No," said Robinson, "I have not seen it."

"Denbeigh left it all to Mrs. Gates. I think the only exception was that little bronze of yours."

"It is not mine! That bronze I gave Denbeigh in payment of a debt, a debt which he knew very well he had no right to throw back on my hands. I don't intend to accept it."

"Oh, well," said D'Orsey, "very probably it will go to enrich some museum! It was this that I wanted to speak to you about, Robinson. The Denbeigh collection is too valuable, too sacred, to be allowed to run the risk of remaining in the possession of any private individual."

"So far as my memory goes," said Robinson lazily, "the things Denbeigh collected were scarcely valuable enough to grace a second-hand sale."

"You are mistaken; and I fear that in coming to you for help I also am mistaken. Mrs. Gates wishes to present the collection to the college—the Bishop refuses it. I had hoped that, through Miss Langdon, you might induce him to reconsider; otherwise the collection goes to Coldston."

"It ought to go there," said Robinson, with a short laugh. "It belongs with the Denbeigh professorship."

D'Orsey rose. "I suppose you have quite decided not to take that?" he said, moving toward the trap-door at the head of the stairs.

"I?" Robinson's voice was indignant.

"I asked, because if you are absolutely certain that the place is open to competition, I should like to make overtures on my own behalf. Your family influence, down there, is so strong that——"

"You must know that I should be glad to do anything I could for you at Coldston," said Robinson cordially. "My mother's uncle and my fa-

ther's brother are both on the Coldston board of trustees."

"I am, perhaps, peculiarly fitted for the position, through the friendship with Denbeigh that developed after you left Florence. I think that, without vanity, I may say that I helped Denbeigh himself somewhat with his last work."

"Yes, I know how he wrote."

"You were always unfair to Denbeigh!" D'Orsey spoke hotly; they were descending the stairs now, and Robinson, who was behind, laughed silently. "Denbeigh himself was conscious of the judgment which you passed upon him; it hurt him. I never knew a man so peculiarly sensitive to the attitude of other minds. It may sound paradoxical, but he was never so much himself as when he was thoroughly imbued with some one else."—Robinson made a queer sound in his throat—"It is a fact. To stimulate him to his highest expression of originality, he needed the atmosphere of another mind. It was a mere habit, just as we hear of one man who always wrote in evening dress, and of another who wrote in a friar's gown. I have my own theory about it"—he stopped modestly; they had reached the lower landing.

"I am interested to know what your theory is."

"I have always felt that, in spite of his constantly being surrounded by others, poor Denbeigh was a lonely soul. We were insufficient, incapable

of meeting him on his own level. And so he, being so preëminently social, found that his work could not proceed without proper and adequate companionship; this, he found—among the giants of the past. 'I am only an echo!' he used to say. But, Robinson, what an echo!"

"And is the 'Higher Renunciation' also an echo?"

"There is the saddest, the most solemn thing that I have ever encountered. The 'Higher Renunciation' is, perhaps, the only personal expression of opinion in which Denbeigh ever indulged himself, an expression of suffering, of noble abnegation and selfless courage. Denbeigh suffered in those last years."

Robinson said nothing. His parting with Denbeigh had not been friendly, and he did not wish to betray this to so devoted a disciple.

"You must not come any farther," said D'Orsey, starting downward after a slight pause. "I insist!"

"Good-by, then," said Robinson, and the two men shook hands.

D'Orsey went on slowly as if undecided. Robinson watched him, much amused. At last D'Orsey stopped, thought a moment, and then turned around.

"Robinson, of course you know that I am more than willing to assist with that biography, if Mrs.

Denbeigh wishes it." He looked up anxiously. "It would not merely be a labor of love—to be connected with Denbeigh's 'Life and Letters' would very materially further my chances at Coldston."

"I understand," said Robinson gravely. "Take my advice and speak to Mrs. Denbeigh about it."

"Good-night," said D'Orsey, and went on down the stairs.

Robinson was disturbed and excited. In regard to Denbeigh, he had never considered himself anything but free; free to think what he pleased, to say what he pleased, and the light which Mrs. Denbeigh had thrown upon her husband's attitude toward himself was a most unwelcome check upon this liberty of expression; he felt as if a burden were being bound upon his most unwilling shoulders. Had he done Denbeigh injustice? Had the man ever really felt any affection for him? He did not believe it, and yet, this monstrous trust, this unwelcome confidence! It was a piece of Denbeigh's infernal cleverness. It oppressed him; he could not work. He felt that he must have some outlet for his excitement.

Bareheaded as he was, Robinson ran down the rest of the way and, after looking carefully about to make sure that D'Orsey was not in sight, he took a short cut across the park, jumped the low, barred fence which separated it from the road, and walked rapidly onward for a mile or more into the coun-

try. He had no more definite object than to walk off his restlessness; but when the iron arch of the entrance to the Gates place loomed dimly before him, he stopped and looked in.

There was only one light to be seen in the lower windows; the wide lawn between him and the house was a mere blur of gray surrounded by soft inky masses of shrubbery and trees. As Robinson watched, some one came to the lighted window, stepped out onto a terrace and from thence moved downward to the lawn. It was a woman in a white dress, but if he had not known it he would hardly have dared assert that any one was there, so faint was the distant figure, and yet, that it was Mrs. Denbeigh, he had no doubt. She was skirting the lawn, following a path that led to the river at the other side of the grounds. Robinson started forward, meaning to follow for a short distance, and, at least, be within call.

"What are you doing here?" said a rough voice.

"For that matter, what are you?"

"I'm about my own business. I'm Mrs. Denbeigh's gardener."

Robinson came forward into the moonlight. "I am Mr. Robinson. I saw Mrs. Denbeigh as I was passing, and was anxious about leaving her here alone."

"I beg your pardon, sir, if I sounded a bit rough —but if you have any influence with Mrs. Den-

beigh, I wish you'd just please stop this going out by herself, this way. I don't think it's safe."

"I am afraid it would take more influence than mine," said Robinson. "She seems to be very fearless."

"She don't know what it is to be afraid; I wish she did, sir. Good-night. I'll have to be hurrying after her; that's a dark place over there by the boat-house."

Robinson walked back to his rooms feeling suddenly dull and weary. Going to his window he leaned out; dark on the horizon were the great shadowy oak-trees of the Gates estate. He thought of Mrs. Denbeigh wandering in the obscurity of those deserted grounds; so she wandered in the dim mazes of this hideous biography, and he was turning his back upon her in both cases, leaving her to the care of any chance hireling who might come her way!

## CHAPTER XI

THE people in Great Dulwich all went to church, and mainly because they liked to go. The habit of church-going was, there, still in force; especially among the college people. The church was old, and beautiful, and quiet; the walk to it, under the trees, or across the grass, was a soothing, peaceful thing; and then, one never knew when the Bishop might preach. His sermons were so popular that it became a fixed law not to announce them; they were also most secular, and all of his family, especially Mr. Cogswell, trembled for what he might say next. He was not timid. Camden and Magellan had been known to go down three points after one of the Bishop's discourses.

But nobody ever interfered with him or criticised him. His little diocese had been for so many years under his undisputed and wholly beneficent sway that it now almost ran of itself. The grandfather of the present Cogswell children—some twenty years ago—had strongly advocated allowing the Bishop to undertake the presidency of the college. "Something must be provided that will give Langdon enough to do to keep him out of mischief," the

old gentleman had said, urged to violent measures by some unusual diocesan activity. Whether the presidency had kept him out of mischief or not was a question—especially when judged from the older Cogswell's point of view; but that respectable gentleman had been some years in his grave, and no one thought of rebelling now against the Bishop, unless it might be an occasional young deacon from a distant part of the country, who did not know what was good for him.

Robinson had fallen in with the Great Dulwich custom, and every Sunday saw him seated in his pew at church and, in pleasant weather, when the service was over, he stood about outside with the rest, talking under the trees. The people from the city waited to see the few members of the faculty whom they knew, and the unknown majority looked over each other's shoulders with polite interest, occasionally whispering a name; but discreetly, with an air of having said something else.

Robinson had not seen Miss Langdon since the evening when Annchen had played for them on the Tower, and after church on the following Sunday he joined her, as she was walking home.

On Sunday, when the good society of Great Dulwich went to the college church, it came out in its own carriages or on the public coach, never on the electric cars! When church was over it always walked through the park, past Bent Hall, and

down the hill to the bridge, where it lingered with its elbows on the coping and looked at the water.

Robinson and Miss Langdon now followed the throng. A gentle murmur of conversation went up all along the line, and the sun fell through the young leaves in golden flecks on the light sunshades of the women, and on their pale-colored summer gowns. One of the duties of the superintendent of the college park was always to have the bridge swept before a pleasant Sunday; and it was even rumored that the Bishop insisted that the stone balustrade at the sides should be dusted, so clean was it.

Miss Langdon stopped at the middle of the bridge.

The glare of the twelve o'clock sun was full upon them. "It is warm," said Robinson.

"And dusty."

He waited politely.

"I think I shall turn back," said Miss Langdon; "the heat of the sun"—she was going to say: "makes my head ache"; but of late she had felt great reluctance to any acknowledgment of delicate health, and she did not finish her sentence.

Robinson turned with her and they walked slowly back again, bowing incessantly to friends and acquaintances. The river curved away on either side, and up stream and down it almost seemed as if the foliage met. Robinson stopped a moment. "How beautiful it is!" he said. "I

have so often thought of it—so often longed for it!"

"And yet, as a place to live in always, you would not find Great Dulwich wholly congenial."

Two weeks ago Robinson would have asked with vivacity, "Why not?" but of late he had begun to think. "It would be foolish," he said, "to demand, in a little city like this, all the advantages of places centuries old—society that has been stable for years; a university life that has been established since the memory of man."

"Ah, you feel it! I feared that you were beginning to feel it!"

He answered soothingly, as to a crying child. "I knew it before I came, and yet I came! Is there still that little pathway up to the Deanery, under the trees? I remember there used to be a boat-house farther down the bank."

"The path is there yet; and the boat-house has been improved. We never made use of the river when you were here. I don't know that you row?"

"I can row in a decent, respectable, old-fashioned boat, where you feel your oars and know that you are making an exertion; but of these slippery, savage inventions called canoes, I am proudly ignorant!"

"The Cogswell children keep their canoes at our boat-house, but we have an old broad-bottomed

boat, which will afford you ample opportunity of exerting yourself, if you ever care to use it."

"Will you allow me to take you out?"

"I shall be very glad."

"And when? To-morrow? But, no—I have a lecture to-morrow afternoon—the morning is free until eleven." He looked at her doubtfully.

"We could start by half-past nine; an hour's row is quite enough." They were following the narrow foot-path up the hill, and on either side of them the leaves of the oak-trees, that had fallen only within the last few weeks, almost hid the young grass that was just beginning to sprout. A fragrance of spring foliage and wood-mould and balsam filled the air, for the sun had been shining warm on the trees throughout the morning.

"I had forgotten that it was so sweet," said Robinson.

"The city people always speak of that, but we do not notice it. Out here, sweetness is our normal atmosphere."

"What a natural attitude for the person 'out here' to take! Although it does seem a pity to lose one's appreciation of the beauty of holiness through the misfortune of being too continuously good!"

She was hurt; but Robinson, walking a few steps behind her, was wholly unconscious of having given offence. He looked with pleasure at the slender figure, mounting the hill with such ease and light-

ness—she would not have shown fatigue for a king's ransom—the bright color burned in her cheeks, her dark blue eyes were full of daring, and she held her head with a fine pride that moved him with troubled joy. He had come back to Great Dulwich meaning to persuade this woman to marry him, if—always if—the dream that he had dreamed, and that, he hoped, she had dreamed also, came true. Once or twice of late he had doubted, but at times like this doubt fled—and he was glad.

At the brow of the hill the trees ended, and the path wound on, a little broader, through the kitchen garden, around a lawn, to the side of the porch. The Bishop was expecting guests to an early Sunday dinner, and people were standing about talking. Robinson, without coming farther, arranged to meet Miss Langdon the next morning at the boat-house, and bade her good-by.

When he came down the hill on the following day he found her there before him, the boat had been taken out and cushions were piled in the stern. "Will you steer?" he said. His voice was hushed and his face sweet and grave; the moment, to him, was beautiful, almost sacramental.

It was slack tide—the current was languidly with them—and rowing was easy. They talked of the people that they knew and of the differences that the years had made; they touched on books, and

on the younger generation; on old furniture and music, on picture galleries abroad, and on places in which to spend the summer; also on the social limitations of the faculty; on the harmlessness of the Great Dulwich "smart set" and the intellectual poverty of Great Dulwich sociey. It came to Robinson, with sudden pain, that he was making conversation; they had never done this when they were young! Conscience-stricken he fell silent.

The morning was warm, and a thin light fog hung over the river. The trees on the banks—softened and faintly colored by the haze—were pale green near at hand, but faded into blue and pinkish lavender in the distance, and the still water gave them back in even more delicate shades. It was a mirror of pearl, made opalescent by the dim reflection of a reddish sun that was striving to burn away the mist.

The dreamy heat, the silence, the exquisite colors, and the soft splashing of the oars brought something to Miss Langdon's face that caused Robinson to say: "You look as you did the morning I went away."

She did not reply for a few moments, then, as she watched the trees slowly passing her on the bank, she shook her head. "I shall never look like that again. Indeed, I do not know that I want to look like that again," she added, fearing that she had betrayed herself.

"I understand; we wish our opportunities to be repeated, our advantages to be proffered us a second time; but when it comes to a duplication of the whole, we are more or less inclined to rest content as we are."

"You are fortunate to be so well satisfied with what you have attained!"

He felt for a moment that she was cruel, unconscious of how sharply he had hurt her. "It is not so much satisfaction with what we have attained as doubt of what we are capable of achieving," he answered, resolutely impersonal.

"It seems to me that it is idle to wish that our opportunities should be repeated under any circumstances."

"But I can look back and see mistakes—blind, stupid mistakes! Times when the rudder has slipped. Let me feel it once more under my hand and I shall hold to it with a grip of iron."

"Has no opportunity of your life ever repeated itself? Did you grasp it when it came?"

Robinson hesitated. "Certain opportunities have repeated themselves, but they presented the same face to me in the present that they showed me in the past—I have not cared to grasp them; but *the opportunity* has not yet come!"

"When it arrives you will not recognize it; you will not know that it is there."

"Not if I have summoned it?"

"Opportunity never comes for calling," she said almost passionately; "and if we have not seized upon it at first, we shall not know it a second time. At every repetition it shrouds itself in fresh mystery. We pass it by or we push it aside—just as you are doing now with one of your own best chances."

It was on the tip of Robinson's tongue to tell her that she was his opportunity; but he saw that she was speaking of the Coldston position. "How did you find out that they had asked me there?" he said.

She smiled. "Are you sure we both mean the same 'there'?"

"Unless you are very much changed, we do; and I was surprised, because it was supposed to be a secret."

"You will accept?"

"I cannot accept it!"

Drawing on one of the tiller ropes, Miss Langdon turned the boat, leaving a great circle in the water.

"Must we go back?" said Robinson wistfully.

"How opposed you are to going back!"

"You mean that you would have me go to Coldston?" Robinson felt incredulous.

"Coldston has much to offer. It is a great university; its library is five times the size of ours. Even in mere money——"

"But would you go there yourself? Think of

it—Coldston!" Robinson demanded heedlessly, and was brought to a consciousness of what he had said by the deep flush that flooded her face. She did not look away from him or attempt to disguise it in any way; but she did not speak.

"My return here"—his voice was very low—"has been an invitation to the shrouded figure of a far different opportunity."

She was frightened. Opportunity, as it had presented itself to both of them long ago, was a doubtful good. She was not quite ready to accept it yet, herself; she retreated. "Naturally Coldston is not —to me, at least—attractive." She stretched out her parasol, which lay closed beside her, and pushed at a brown oak leaf that was circling slowly between them and the shore.

"I feel indignant"—there was more jest than earnest in his voice—"that you should relegate me to a place which for yourself you set aside so contemptuously. Am I not also a Great Dulwich person? Think how you refused D'Orsey any share in me when he claimed me for Coldston that first day I came back!"

This was better; she was not ready, yet, for a decisive moment. "How strange it must have been for you to see all the children, the babies even, grown up—Bennie and Margaret——"

"That reminds me—what has come over Bennie and Margaret?"

"Has anything come over Bennie and Margaret?" Her eyes evaded his.

"Three weeks ago it was impossible not to see that those two were rather special friends; but at Annchen's tea, the other day in the Tower, they seemed to avoid each other, and Bennie is not happy; as for Margaret—I walked in from the city with her yesterday—she seemed too hilarious."

"She takes her hospital cases very seriously."

"It wasn't that—I should deplore anything that would interfere with the friendship between those two children."

"I am not sure that I agree with you there; if, quietly and unconsciously, the two should grow apart, it would be a great relief to me."

"How can you say that? 'Quietly and unconsciously,' " he quoted, "those two have built up a beautiful, ideal friendship. It is the sweetest thing I have seen since my return. Rather than offend one of these little ones it were better——"

She put out a hand in protest. "You are unduly sentimental; how many love-affairs——"

"But this is not a love-affair, it is something infinitely more precious. Love may be there; but love is merely secondary to the beauty of the rest. Can't you bring them together?"

She smiled, secure in her own judgment. "I hardly think I wish to interfere; and besides—

Margaret has emancipated herself entirely from my influence."

"But not Bennie."

"No, not Bennie; he knows what I think of Margaret."

"He knows! How is that? And what do you think?"

She resented something inquisitorial in the tone. "I have thought it wise to tell him that they are obviously unsuited to each other."

Robinson looked worried. "I should have said the contrary; but then I have great faith in your judgment."

"It is growing late," she said nervously; the chimes rang for ten some time ago. I am afraid you may miss your lecture."

Robinson bent with more energy to the oars, and except for a word or two of murmured admiration of the foliage and the water, they rowed home in silence. He tried to think that it was the silence of happiness—the happiness he had dreamed of and longed for through so many years; but after they had reached the landing and climbed the hill together, and when he had carried the cushions up to the Bishop's and gone back to his Tower, it seemed as if the fulfilment of his dream had left him strangely empty-hearted and dissatisfied!

## CHAPTER XII

TWO or three days later Robinson, with many grumbles and protests, was dressing to go out to dinner at the Fanshawes'. The weather, at one bound, had sprung into summer; even at the top of the Tower it was uncomfortably warm, and Robinson, as he struggled furiously with his studs, said rude things about people who invited you out in the broiling heat. At last he clattered down the stairs, took a short cut through the park, and arrived at the Fanshawes' ten minutes before the hour.

Mrs. Fanshawe was sitting, calmly expectant, in the drawing-room; and a few minutes later Mr. Fanshawe himself made his appearance. "Isn't Margaret down yet?" he said, looking about him with an air of annoyance. "How do you do, Robinson? I am glad to see that you keep up the old traditions of punctuality. Nobody thinks of being on time for dinner nowadays. Ah!" He glanced out of the window. "There are the Caldwells—but the Caldwells belong to the old *régime*! Where is Margaret? Not that it makes much

difference; I fancy we sha'n't see the Grahams for half an hour or more."

"The Grahams came two or three minutes ago. Mrs. Graham is from North Camden, where they have all the minor virtues, punctuality among the rest," said Mrs. Fanshawe; "and Margaret"—but here the Caldwells and Grahams entered the room, followed by Margaret herself, looking pale and very tired. Her father fussily rang the drawing-room bell, and in a few minutes dinner was announced.

"Really, Mrs. Fanshawe," said Mr. Fanshawe, as they entered the dining-room, "why will you persist in always having eight people? Robinson can't sit by Caldwell!"

"We shall not quarrel," said Robinson.

"You know that the Maxwells disappointed us at the last moment," said Mrs. Fanshawe.

"I heard that Maxwell was ill," said Mr. Graham. "Little Miss Williams met him and helped him home."

"Oh, we all know Maxwell's illnesses!" said Mr. Fanshawe. "He would prefer death to a dinner-party."

"I hear, Graham," said Mr. Caldwell, leaning across the table, "that it has been voted to allow that little Miss Williams to enter your classes."

Graham, who was a young man with light yel-

low hair and a heavy mustache, gave a non-committal shrug of his shoulders.

"It is an outrage!" said Mr. Fanshawe. "The Bishop will find his mistake before another year is over! This horde of feminine humanity clamoring at our gates——"

"Poor Miss Williams!" said Mrs. Fanshawe. "She only wants to study some advanced botany. It is a shame to call her a 'horde.' "

"In Miss Williams," said Fanshawe oratorically, "I see the entering wedge."

"That is more like it," murmured Robinson.

Margaret, who was sitting at her mother's left, glanced across the table at him with a faint look of amusement.

"Wherever Langdon can," proceeded Mr. Fanshawe, "he lets down the barriers. Women have been known in Maxwell's classes."

"Only Nellie," protested Margaret; "she went in to do some Greek, to help her in one of her college examinations."

"Well, isn't Nellie a woman?" snapped her father.

"Is the Bishop in favor of co-education?" asked Robinson.

"There is no knowing what the Bishop is in favor of," said Mr. Fanshawe darkly. "It depends entirely on how much there is at stake." Robinson, while he was not unduly fond of the

Bishop, felt his face flush with annoyance. "The trouble with Langdon," continued Mr. Fanshawe, who frequently spoke of the Bishop in this friendly way when he became excited, "is his lust of power. If it were suggested to him that the admission of women into this college was one of the things he couldn't accomplish, I think he would leave no stone unturned until he got it done."

"But that would not be a bit like him," said Margaret.

"We should be living now," said Mr. Fanshawe, "in the Deanery, if it hadn't been for this very trait of his character."

"Should we?" said Mrs. Fanshawe.

"When I was appointed, Cogswell said something in the trustee meeting about giving us that house; from that moment the Bishop determined to keep it."

"I can't see why you should want to live in it," said Mrs. Caldwell; "this is a nice new house, with good high ceilings and all the modern improvements; the Deanery is terribly old-fashioned."

"The Bishop makes all his improvements himself," said Mr. Caldwell; "every one of them out of his own pocket."

"Or Cogswell's," interrupted Mr. Fanshawe. "Such wasteful, unnecessary alterations as leaded windows and open fireplaces. The Bishop makes a great fuss about economy; but in reality he is

the most extravagant man I ever met. Not that I know much in regard to it—he has never even offered to show that house to me."

"Seeing how often you have been there," said Mrs. Fanshawe, "it hardly seems necessary that he should."

"Trust a married woman to oppose her husband!" said Mr. Fanshawe.

"And what would become of 'The Court' if they moved away?" said Mrs. Graham, with a childish laugh.

Robinson looked at her inquiringly.

"Oh, Mr. Robinson pretends he doesn't understand!"

"If you don't belong to the Court set, Mr. Robinson," said Mrs. Caldwell, "you are nobody in Great Dulwich; but perhaps you do belong—we had better take care what we say."

"I have the honor to be a friend of Miss Langdon's."

"But we are all that!" Mr. Graham anxiously explained. "In fact, Mrs. Graham and I were there this afternoon."

"And I must say," said Mrs. Graham, "that I sha'n't go again until the term is over. She is completely surrounded by that set of fashionable young men, and has neither eyes nor ears for anybody else. In North Camden middle-aged ladies never thought of receiving crowds of——"

"There were enough young men there this afternoon," said her husband, with a glance of warning, "to occupy any woman's eyes and ears."

"Oh, yes! and she was thankful to have somebody come and help her entertain. She told me so—and then took not the slightest pains to introduce me to them!"

"Introduce them to you," corrected her husband.

"We always mentioned the singular first at North Camden," said Mrs. Graham defensively.

Robinson, too, had been at the Bishop's lately in the afternoons only to find Miss Langdon inaccessible in the throng that surrounded her; still he did not care to hear any further comments. "In my young days Great Dulwich was rather a quiet little city," he said, "but I have spent the last three weeks in a round of unceasing dissipation—teas, receptions, dinners, suppers, parties on the river, golf, tennis, in fact—is it Great Dulwich?"

"It is Great Dulwich under the Plutocracy," said Mr. Fanshawe.

"Yet the families are much the same: Cogswells, Bents, Langdons——"

"Oh, the same little set, and the college is still their pet plaything; but that Camden and Magellan railway has made millionnaires of the Bents and the Cogswells, and the Bishop wouldn't be the Bishop if he hadn't known how to profit by their knowledge of affairs."

"I regard the Camden and Magellan," said Mr. Caldwell heavily, "as a most undesirable factor in our Dulwich life. It has widened the breach between the college and the city. We can't expect——"

"To vie with Gabriel," interrupted Mr. Fanshawe, "especially when he sings to the tune set by Henry D. Cogswell."

"We can't expect—" proceeded Mr. Caldwell inexorably.

"No, of course we can't," said his wife. "In the old days there was no thought of vying, and it makes life very hard for those of us whose standard is simpler and——"

"We can't expect—" Mr. Caldwell was faint, yet pursuing.

"It makes it quite impossible for an assistant professor's wife to entertain." Mrs. Graham's tones were high and eager.

"Good conversation and tea and biscuit ought not to be difficult to procure in a city of Great Dulwich's pretensions," suggested Robinson.

"Tea and biscuit are not," said Mrs. Fanshawe, so quietly that no one knew she had spoken.

"Miss Langdon is the only person in Great Dulwich sure enough of her conversation to dare offer people nothing but tea and biscuit!" said Mrs. Graham, with ill-concealed spite.

"Miss Langdon is a law unto herself," said

young Graham, anxious to retain an amiable neutrality. "It is the way in which things are done that counts, my dear. And, moreover, the Deanery is almost the only place in Great Dulwich where the students and professors may meet on a friendly footing."

"That is the great lack in our American colleges," said Robinson. "What we need among our professors are men of affairs, who exert a wide influence upon the country at large, men who bring the younger fellows about them."

"I'd like to know how you are going to do that," said Mr. Caldwell slowly, "when the younger fellows don't want to come."

"But the university man in England," said Robinson, "is sought by his students. Read any biography and you will meet this influence of the instructor at every turn. On this side of the water, with one or two exceptions, we know nothing of this phase of college life."

"You might know about it if you'd search for it," said Fanshawe. "You younger men"—Robinson bowed his thanks for this involuntary tribute—"you younger men," Fanshawe proceeded, "for Robinson is young in experience, if in nothing else, ought to think before you are so ready to criticise. I have my students at my house twice every month."

Margaret groaned faintly.

"And, more than this," her father proceeded,

"they come to me in their troubles, they consult me about their finances. They know that if they call upon me in their difficulties they will always find a friend."

"Friends," said Robinson disparagingly, "grow on every tree for the deserving young man. It is inspiration that our students need, enthusiasm, and who has it to give them?"

"Tom Bent said only the other day that he would hate to think what an arid desert his intellectual life would have been without Mr. Maxwell," said Margaret.

Mr. Fanshawe and Mr. Caldwell here burst into scornful laughter; but young Graham did not smile. "In the lives of two or three men whom I can mention, Professor Maxwell has had more influence than any other being on the face of the earth," he said.

Fanshawe gave a short derogatory laugh. "What does Maxwell see of the men?" he asked. "He is a hermit; he resents the slightest interruption. I have had him sit and play with his pen and look longingly at his books until he fairly drove me out of his study, and I am not the only person. His conduct in this way is notorious; we none of us like to go near him, he is such a miser of his time."

"I have never seen him yet," said Graham, almost hotly, "begrudge his time to any student

who sought him. I tell you, Fanshawe, Maxwell can get hold of the very foundations of a fellow's soul. It's no wonder that Bennie Maxwell is what he is."

"Oh, Bennie's all right!" said Mr. Fanshawe, "and so is Louis, but there's no good in that other cub—what is his name?"

"Ned," said Mrs. Caldwell in tones of disgust.

"There is a certain set of rich young fellows," said Mr. Fanshawe, "who have always made a sort of fetich of Maxwell. It began with Tom Bent; he got into some pretty ugly trouble about the time he graduated, and Maxwell helped him out of it. The Bents are excellent friends to have. That secretaryship with old Mr. Bent has been a good thing for Bennie."

"Of course you knew that he had left it," said Mr. Graham; "he has taken Folsom's place with the Bishop."

"Oh, yes, I knew," said Mr. Fanshawe, "a knack of getting on with the powers that be is an excellent asset for a young man beginning life!"

Margaret's eyes blazed. She opened her lips as if to reply; but Mrs. Fanshawe rose from the table and took the ladies away with her to the drawing-room.

Robinson hoped then for some change in the conversation; but the men left behind continued to expatiate on college politics. Even Graham's cau-

tion thawed, and he joined with the others in bitter innuendo as to the Bishop's policy, his unfair use of power, his arbitrary rule, and his aristocratic leanings. Great Dulwich, too, came in for its share of denunciation. The good, friendly, home-like little city was torn in bits: its habits, its customs, its narrowness, its propriety, its smart set, and every incongruous and contradictory evil that could possibly be invented was attributed to it. And Robinson, heart-sick, pleaded an imaginary engagement soon after they rejoined the ladies, and went back to his rooms.

He had been there about an hour when a small electric bell near the door rang sharply. Glancing at it with annoyance, he took his lamp in his hand, and putting it outside his door on the landing he ran quickly downstairs. Bennie Maxwell was standing there, his head bent at the opening of a speaking-tube.

"I can't shout down through a thing like that! Why didn't you come up?" said Robinson.

"If you have very many visitors," said Bennie, as he followed him up the stairs, "you will have to come to shouting, I am afraid." They had reached the light, and Bennie saw that Robinson was in evening dress. "But you are going out?"

"I have just come in. I have been dining at the Fanshawes'. Suppose we go on up to the *loggia*." He led the way again, gave Bennie a chair, offered

him cigars, and when he had seen that he was comfortable, took a turn about, kicked a chair or two into place, and finally he seated himself on the stone balustrade. "Woof!" he said.

Bennie leaned back his head and laughed softly. "Were the Caldwells there?" he asked.

"They were; and a Mr. and Mrs. Graham—also Margaret. By the way, doesn't that hospital thing of hers give her a holiday?"

"She has some special arrangement, I believe," said Bennie, stiffening.

"I only had a few words with her; but she looked pale and tired. I didn't like to say very much, for she gets little enough sympathy at home."

"She doesn't get any!" said Bennie. "When will people understand," he went on, a little more hotly, "that girls need to be employed just as much as boys? What kind of a life is a round of teas and dinners, among that stupid set of people, for a girl like Margaret? It is a good deal harder, too, than it used to be. Margaret saw more of Miss Langdon up to some months ago, and of course over there at the Bishop's there was a different tone."

"Why should she see less of Miss Langdon now?"

"For one thing she is busy; for another"—he hesitated—"I really can't say what it is," he

finished lamely. "They don't seem to hit it off so well recently."

Robinson got down from his seat on the balustrade and took a chair near Bennie, puffing away at his pipe in silence. He wondered what had brought Bennie up there; it could hardly be the mere pleasure of his—Robinson's—society. "How is your father?" he said at last.

"That is just what I came up for. I fear he is ill, really ill."

"Is he in bed?" Robinson's tone was anxious.

"No," said Bennie, "he insists on keeping on with his work, but we want to get him away. You know Arrichat?"

Robinson nodded. "Where they all go in the summer?"

"Yes. Mrs. Denbeigh has lent us her cottage there, and Dr. Saltus says that if we can get my father off immediately, it may save a serious breakdown. I have seen the Bishop and the Dean about it."

"Fanshawe?" said Robinson. "When did you see Fanshawe?"

"Just before I came to you," said Bennie. "He offered to take some of my father's classes in Greek history, and said he would see that his work was divided among the men. Mr. Graham said he'd help, too."

"Graham can't help," said Robinson.

"You know my father is secretary of the faculty," said Bennie; "Mr. Graham is going to take that work, but—but there are about three weeks more of those wretched schools in the city."

"What does your father teach in them?" asked Robinson quickly.

"Greek in two that are preparing girls for college."

"Should you like me to do it?" said Robinson.

"I hardly dared ask," said Bennie, "and yet, unless those schools are provided for, my father cannot be persuaded to go away. I have said nothing to him about you—to tell the truth I never thought of you until the Bishop suggested that you might help."

"The Bishop?" said Robinson. "I should think Fanshawe would have thought of me."

"Oh, he said there was no use of asking you!"

"Exactly what I should have said of him," said Robinson with a short laugh.

"But you know you can always count on him to do really hard things for you. He talks and snaps like a black-and-tan terrier, but he never behaves like one."

"What a queer lot we are!" said Robinson.

After settling some other details, Bennie left. Robinson lighted him downstairs and then returned to the *loggia*. Below, the lights in the Deanery twinkled through the leaves of the trees; the park

was very quiet. Afar off Robinson heard the sound of horses' hoofs on the gravel of the drive; two lamps flared toward him and then disappeared. Miss Langdon was coming home from some dinner-party in the city.

## CHAPTER XIII

IT was for a long time a puzzle to Robinson—one he never solved, in fact—why, without hesitation or thought, he had offered to take Professor Maxwell's classes in the city. He not only hated girls in the abstract, but to him the girl in search of information was an unpardonable monstrosity. Any diligence in the acquirement of the arts he freely forgave in the daughters of his friends; but the concrete intellectual female was to him anathema. Feeling thus, that he should have opened the way to constant intercourse with this most objectionable species was a mystery he was never tired of expatiating upon. He had not particularly minded being cramped for time—that was a not unpleasing novelty; he came back from his lectures at the college only to hurry into the city to his lessons there; and, when he returned to his rooms in the evening, his preparation for the work of the following day demanded every minute he could squeeze from his already well-filled schedule. The sense of hurry and movement was exciting, and his graphic representations of the

labors of his treadmill were a constant amusement to the men who sat at the commons table with him.

"How do you suppose that Maxwell has carried this on so long, Robinson?" said one of them one day. Robinson put down his knife and fork and looked at him. "Had that never occurred to you before?" the man continued sardonically.

"It has not only occurred to me, it has been present with me every hour. It is something I cannot speak about. More than half of the men here in Great Dulwich are slaving in those galleys at the expense of their health, of their brains, of their self-respect!"

"Self-respect? Oh, come, Robinson!"

"Men cannot teach women and retain their self-respect. It is morally disintegrating! Women emanate a spiritual X-ray to which no man—not even one encased in triple armor—can expose himself. Maxwell might come out with his soul intact, but"—he looked critically about the table—"none of you."

"When a man wants to marry, one of those positions in the city is the first thing that he tries to get," said another of the group. "We none of us could afford to marry without."

"Yes, men who are engaged to nice, sweet girls!" said Robinson indignantly.

"And why not?" his first questioner inquired angrily. "Haven't we mothers? Weren't our sisters educated?"

"Yes, why not?" came from all the others, in varying tones of rage or amusement.

"How can you expect to come out from those—those emotional greenhouses fit fibre for the society of any wholesome, sane, good, common-sense woman? Those girls—those miserable, moon-faced, sheep-eyed girls!"

There was a shout of laughter.

"Who make everything personal, from the binomial theorem to the Punic wars; who weep if they can't remember the answers, and expect you to stop and take up their individual problems when the class is dismissed; who—but the subject is one that should not be discussed! There is not a man of you here that doesn't agree with me. The place for the ordinary school-girl is a—is a nunnery! Shakespeare knew!"

"And did they all stand round and look at you that way, Robinson?" inquired Devinney, a young Southerner.

"What way?"

"Oh, a kind of 'love that in their lonely longing lay!' " answered the young man, who always increased his almost forgotten Southern accent when his intentions were humorous. "One of them comes up and asks a question, while the rest listen,

with their arms around each other's waists, and their heads on one side!"

"Poor Devinney!" said one of the others. "This is his first year at it."

"It is also my last," said Robinson, leaving the table and sauntering over to the Deanery to make a call.

Commencement week was approaching, the Bishop's house was full of guests, and Robinson's fragmentary moments with Miss Langdon were unsatisfactory.

"Why have you absented yourself from the lower world?" she said to him, when they were left alone together at the end of the evening.

"The lower world gets on very well without me."

Miss Langdon wondered if he felt hurt, and searched in her mind for some form of apology. "Our life at Commencement time has grown stereotyped; we follow the same routine year after year, like machines, and our personal tastes and preferences are set aside for the time being. Still, you did not even come to the reception the other night. I know those great functions are dull."

"I should have come," said Robinson penitently, "but Annchen Gates and Mrs. Denbeigh had planned a moonlight party on the Tower, and I hated to disappoint them, especially as I knew that

at a thing like the reception I should see nothing of you. Did you hear the music down here?"

"There were a great many people out in the garden listening, I believe," she said coldly. "I am glad that you have not been lonely."

"Oh, as for loneliness," said Robinson, "that is a matter more or less of idleness or occupation! Now that those city schools have closed and since I have had no lectures, I have felt a little—desolate. This is a costly kind of spectacle—all these young things—for a man who has no ties in the world, and I shall be glad when the Summer School begins and I get to work again. So soon as I am started, pegging away at my books again, I shall forget that I have no part in life but that of a looker on."

"There is a certain charm even in looking on," she said, glancing wistfully to where Harry and Sylvia, with a company of young friends, were sitting under the oak-trees on the lawn. "Do you know that we are all off for Arrichat a week from to-day?" she added, as if in an afterthought.

Robinson's face showed his consternation. "You go away so soon?" he said.

"I thought you knew."

"I had not set the date of your departure until after the Summer School was over."

"The Gates are going up now, and I thought it

might be pleasanter to make the journey with them."

"And does the Bishop go with you?"

"Yes; Mr. Fanshawe is the Dean of the Summer School."

Robinson had nothing to say; he went back to the Tower with a feeling that he had mismanaged his time. Nothing had happened as he had intended, and he had allowed himself to be drawn from his purpose by the pressure of outside work. It was a festal occasion of some kind, and the park was illuminated with Japanese lanterns. Idly leaning over the parapet of the Tower, he watched the girls' gay dresses and the boys' black gowns moving below him like the colors in a kaleidoscope; suddenly he felt himself a stranger to it all. What was he doing here?

During the last years of his college course he had belonged more to the inner than to the outer circle of life in Great Dulwich; but now he was beginning to find out that the bridge by which he had then crossed the chasm between student and instructor had been mainly a matter of far-sighted optics and imagination; his present position had been reached by another route, and he was seeing Great Dulwich at a different angle. From the other side of the ocean, Great Dulwich had always beckoned to him in the guise of home; to-night he found that he was not at one with it. He did not

belong, and he feared that it would be a difficult task ever to overcome his sense of strangeness. He was lonely, an alien.

The lights went out, the voices were stilled. Robinson watched on, and he was filled with self-disgust and weariness. He told himself that once more he had let happiness slip through his fingers.

## CHAPTER XIV

VACATION was more than half over, and the park had become very quiet. No faint murmur of talk or echo of laughter now came up from the Bishop's garden when Robinson leaned over the parapet of the Tower. The commons was closed and Robinson was taking his meals at a small restaurant outside the college gates.

He was coming away from luncheon there one day when, on looking up, he was surprised to meet Mrs. Denbeigh. "I thought you had gone away!" he said.

"I was afraid you had left Great Dulwich, too," she answered, "until Bennie Maxwell told me you were here."

"I needed a change—the only place where you can get rid of Great Dulwich people in summer is Great Dulwich itself."

"It is unfortunate then that we have met; at least for you," said Mrs. Denbeigh. "For me it is a piece of good luck. I have come to a stand-still in my work."

"The biography?"

"Yes. I only want some information about certain ordinary facts. Do you think you could come up to-morrow morning, say at half-past ten?"

Robinson put out his hand impatiently as if to stop her.

"But I am not going to ask for anything more than a few simple dates and a little precise information about your life with Mr. Denbeigh in Florence. You were of great assistance to him."

"The assistance I gave was mechanical."

"It was not mechanical—I beg your pardon—but I have seen your notes." She walked on swiftly for a few rods in silence. "Will you come?" she asked at last. "I might as well say that I hoped to meet you when I started out this morning. Bennie told me that you took your meals at the Garniers'."

"But I can be of no help!"

"Ah, well, then, never mind!" she said, holding out her hand.

"But I do mind! If I could be of any assistance of course I should come——"

She shook her head, still offering her hand.

"I am coming," said Robinson. "What time did you say?"

"I shall not expect you," said Mrs. Denbeigh. "Will you stop the coach for me?"

Robinson stopped the coach and helped her to mount to the top. "I am coming," he said.

Mrs. Denbeigh smiled down at him, but made no answer.

Robinson arose next morning after a night of indecision, and strolled out to his breakfast. He went beyond Garniers', as far on the road toward the city as he could, making the excuse to himself of having no appetite, but when he had gone a good three-quarters of a mile he hurried back in fear of being late for his appointment with Mrs. Denbeigh. He had but just reached the entrance of the restaurant when Bennie Maxwell hailed him.

"Come in and take breakfast with me," said Robinson hospitably.

"I had breakfast an hour ago," said Bennie. "It is nearly ten o'clock; but——"

"Come in and talk to me while I eat mine, then."

Bennie turned, but hesitated at the door. "I ought not to; I have oceans to do at the office; but the truth is I want to see you. I hate meddling, and yet I am going to do it. Are you sure you have time to spare?"

"Any amount you like; there is always time for meddling."

Bennie followed to the table which now was regularly reserved for Robinson, who would have been startled to discover how the restaurant keeper and his wife regarded him; he did not know how nearly he was approaching that dread period when a man develops "ways." These astute people had studied

the habits of elderly, unmarried professors for many years, and Bennie smiled as he noted the clean, fresh morning paper, the egg, the toast, and all the other small attentions to needs that Robinson himself would have hardly been able to enumerate. The gradual approaches to the land of "ways" is hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed, unsparingly, to babes!

"Do you hear good news from your father and mother?"

"It is not that,'" said Bennie, divining the other's desire to give him an opening. "You know that Annchen Gates and her mother are staying at the hotel in Arrichat? It is full of Great Dulwich people."

"Don't they see enough of each other in the winter?" inquired Robinson mildly.

"According to Nellie—my small sister, you know—some of them are seeing a deal too much of each other this summer."

"That may well be true. Who else is down there?"

"The Fanshawes are at the hotel, and—Harry Cogswell."

Robinson looked up at Bennie in surprise.

"Everybody knows just how attractive Harry Cogswell is—to some people. That he is not in the least attractive to others is nothing to his discredit; but that doesn't hinder him—" Bennie came to a

halt, very red in the face, and—breathing a little harmless malediction—looked helplessly into Robinson's disapproving eyes.

"Are you speaking of Margaret?" Robinson's tone was cold.

"No! What has Margaret to do with Harry Cogswell? It's Annchen, of course."

"But where is the harm? It struck me, before they went away, that in the maternal quarter such a thing would be rather welcome. Mrs. Gates did a little repressing, but it was only to keep her hand in; she didn't mean it."

"She has not, by any means, been keeping her hand in this summer, the pompous old idiot!" said Bennie disrespectfully. "She's given Annchen her head in a way that the most careless mother around here would consider criminal. What I am afraid of is that she'll find her mistake and pull up all of a sudden; then there will be the devil to pay, and nobody but poor little Annchen to foot the bill."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why—Harry doesn't care."

"Are you sure?" Robinson's face was filled with consternation.

"He has been in love with Margaret ever since we were children together."

"But Margaret?" asked Robinson absently.

Bennie was looking down at the table, crumbling

a piece of bread in his fingers. "Margaret's all right," he said shortly.

Robinson smiled.

"At least so far as I know." Bennie did not look up. "But that's neither here nor there. The thing we have to do is to get Annchen away from Arrichat. If Annchen could come to Mrs. Denbeigh's, it might bring Harry to his senses. You see she's throwing herself at his head, and he's had too much of that already."

"It is not like Annchen."

"It takes them that way, sometimes," said Bennie sagely; "and Annchen's pretty reckless."

"Even if her aunt asked her to come home, would she leave Arrichat?"

"I don't know. That's where you come in."

"But I am the last person in the world—!" began Robinson in consternation.

"I thought that so long as Annchen was concerned, you wouldn't mind making better friends with Mrs. Denbeigh," suggested Bennie diffidently. "She is out at the Gates place, and she really is a delightful woman. You were there a lot before Commencement—you might say you were interested in Denbeigh, if you needed an excuse for going again. Not that you would need an excuse!" he added hastily, as Robinson frowned.

"I have an engagement with her at half-past ten," said Robinson, forgetting that he had asked

Bennie to come in with him on purpose to evade this appointment.

Bennie made a motion to rise. "It is nearly that now, and it takes half an hour to get there!"

Robinson went on tranquilly eating his breakfast. "It may have been eleven," he said vaguely. "I was not quite sure that I should go. The matter was of no importance—some papers of Denbeigh's."

"She will never forgive you, if you neglect it!" said Bennie, getting to his feet with a clatter of chairs. "She is so sensitive about Denbeigh that you've got to look out for yourself—even when you praise him."

"Sit down, man; I haven't finished my breakfast."

Bennie seated himself, protest in every muscle. "You are losing our only chance," he said, after a few minutes had gone by; "and if you only knew what a little fool Annchen is making of herself——"

"Haven't you lived long enough to learn that when a woman is occupied in that way nothing will stop her?"

"She might be induced to do it less conspicuously, and, besides, she isn't a woman; she is only a genius."

"I don't believe Mrs. Denbeigh intends to stay here herself."

"Yes, she does; she will be out there the rest of the summer."

"She gave me the impression of being on the wing."

"That is what Mrs. Denbeigh always does."

Robinson glanced up quickly from the egg he was so carefully chipping. The younger man's face was calmly practical. Bennie's set despised all cloaks and screens. "If a fellow wants to say a thing, why can't he *say* it!" was their frequent exasperated comment.

But this time Robinson did not want to say anything; he finished his egg, paid his score, offered Bennie a cigar, and the two walked away together.

When they came to the gate of the college park, Bennie stopped. "Good-by," he said.

"This is hardly a thing to blurt out to Annchen's aunt," protested Robinson nervously. "Have you nothing to suggest?"

"You will have to exercise tact about it—tell Mrs. Denbeigh you think she needs company. She must, you know, out there all by herself, with nothing going on."

"All right; I will exercise tact."

Bennie drew a joyful breath of relief. "You'll do it, then!" he cried. "I was beginning to be afraid I should have to myself."

"And why should you not?" said Robinson

eagerly. "I don't know Mrs. Denbeigh well, and——"

"But I can't; it would look as if I wanted to get Harry away. Oh, don't back out, now! You must see why I can't interfere. There are some things that a fellow ought not to be called upon to explain!"

"Aren't you going to have a vacation this summer?" asked Robinson. "You might do something toward straightening things out, in more directions than one, if you went down there yourself."

Bennie's lips closed in a hard line. "I couldn't do anything in any direction," he declared shortly; "besides, there are arrears of work in the office this summer. I oughtn't to think of leaving. But I wonder if you have any idea of the recklessness of which Annchen is capable? I don't want to tell tales—the things that Nellie writes"—he stopped, frowning anxiously—"and it's not any too good for Nellie, either; of course, she admires everything Annchen Gates chooses to do."

"Has Margaret no influence with Annchen?"

"Margaret has done all she could. Annchen—well, she is inclined to be a little jealous of Margaret. You have to be careful in these things; now, in speaking to Mrs. Denbeigh, you wouldn't want to mention Harry, of course."

"Is there any other simple matter of diplomacy that I can attend to for you?"

"If it was easy, I'd do it myself; but you older fellows are more used to managing," said Bennie, with all youth's faith in the subtlety of age.

" Good-by," said Robinson abruptly.

As he trudged on in the hot sun toward Mrs. Denbeigh's, he shook his head; the ways of the younger generation, in their apparently guileless transparency, were a sealed book to him.

The Gates place looked fresh and green as he turned in at the high iron gates between the thick hedges. He was conscious of a nervous dread of the coming interview: Annchen's affair, he felt sure, would somehow manage itself; but—Denbeigh?

How much of Denbeigh did his wife know? How much suspect? Had he ever revealed himself to her? Could she have any suspicion that he—Robinson—felt to Denbeigh as one might to a harmless, but malodorous, reptile? If he were obliged to remove him, he should not hesitate to take him fearlessly by the tail and throw him out; but he would have to wash his hands many times before he rid himself of the memory—he had not done washing them yet! Robinson was more certain of his feelings than he was of his biology. And, in this mood, he was going to see the man's widow, to be consulted about his biography. He stopped short, half-way up the drive, almost determined to go back to the Tower; but as he hesitated the young

gardener who had spoken to him one night in the spring dropped the handle of his lawn-mower and ran toward him.

"Mrs. Denbeigh told me to tell you that she would be down by the river, Mr. Robinson."

There was no chance of retreat. Robinson followed his guide, and after a few turns of the path saw Mrs. Denbeigh sitting at the root of an oak-tree.

"You see I thought you would come after all," she said, when he came within hearing; "and I waited for you because the path winds once or twice before we reach the river. Have you ever been down here before?"

"I can't say. I have walked nearly everywhere in this region. Where are we going?"

She rose, as if reminded of a duty. "To the boat-house," she said; "I thought you would like it better."

The narrow path wound under the trees, and the river could be seen glittering, like laughter, through the branches as they came nearer to the end of the walk, where a flight of stone steps led to a small house built out over the water. Mrs. Denbeigh ran down, and Robinson followed her into a large light room. The windows on three sides, toward the river, were continuous, with deep window-seats under them; a broad awning over the porch outside shut out the glare of the sun; to the

left, up stream, a bridge spanned the tumbling rapids at the head of a little water-fall, and below them the river widened and swept toward Great Dulwich.

Robinson, as by some unconscious attraction, stepped through the glass door that led to a porch facing the water-fall. "How have you managed to escape the fiends in search of 'power'?" he asked.

"There are ways. Enterprise has a short radius in Great Dulwich, and fortunately my place is just beyond its sweep; moreover, I own both banks here." She led the way back to the room in a determined fashion, and seated herself at a small table where a quantity of note-books and papers had already been arranged.

Robinson drew forward a large chair and sat down opposite her. There were a few moments of silence. He was tutoring himself to disguise his true opinion of Denbeigh. When two people are trying to hide the same thing, concealment is apt to be successful.

The reflections from the river flickered on the ceiling; the room was cool, yet filled with sunlight. The gay flowers in the boxes on the railings of the porch tossed in the river breeze, and the water gurgled around the piles on which the house was built. Robinson sighed, for the pity of wasting all this upon unprofitable memories.

"You would rather do something else?" said his hostess suddenly.

"By no means. I am quite ready to give you any information in my power."

Mrs. Denbeigh took up a pen, and, reading from a slip of paper in front of her, asked him question after question, in the most brief and business-like manner. At the end of about an hour she stopped. "This will be of the greatest help to me. I am much indebted to you, Mr. Robinson. No one else could have given me just what you have."

Robinson thought a moment. "Is there nothing else that I can do? I have reconsidered; my decision of yesterday—was hasty——"

"I cannot allow you to reconsider."

"Not if I wish to do so?"

She picked up a bundle of papers on the table and thoughtfully divided them into two parts. "I don't know what to say," she murmured.

"You must clearly recognize my limitations. I may not be able to help you in the least, but why not let me make the attempt? Another hour's work will not commit either of us."

"If you should be able to show me the right way, or even to convince me that I was not altogether in the wrong, there would be no need for me to ask your help again."

"You have not asked; I am offering it."

"And whether I am wrong or right, no one can do this but myself."

"That is where I differ. This work should be put into the hands of D'Orsey and your sister. Moreover, before you read anything to me, I feel that I must point out to you that—your husband and I disagreed, fundamentally disagreed. I also have expressed myself in print in regard to his literary merit, and also to several people in Great Dulwich privately."

"May I ask to whom?"

Robinson thought a moment. "To D'Orsey and Miss Langdon; to the president also; but, when I come to consider it, the only person to whom I have spoken with any freedom of expression is Miss Langdon. I felt then at liberty to say what I pleased; perhaps that accounts for my believing that I had chosen to do so more frequently than I really did."

Mrs. Denbeigh sat a long time at the desk, making small, aimless pencil-marks upon the edge of the papers spread in front of her. "Of course," she said at last, "I know of the quarrel."

"There never was any quarrel."

She went on making pencil-marks on the papers, evidently debating with herself.

"Are you willing to show me what you have there?" Robinson asked.

"These are Mr. Denbeigh's autobiographical

notes," she said, handing him a small sheaf of papers; "if you will look at them while I read you my own attempt at the biography, it may show you what I have been trying to do."

Robinson took the papers and, sitting down in his chair, began to spread them out on a table at his elbow; all at once he fell to fumbling in his pocket.

"Perhaps you would like to smoke?" she said.

Robinson looked shocked. "I am only hunting for a pencil—it is better that I should jot down any queries that I may have to make. It will secure you from interruption."

"Nevertheless, you may wish to smoke."

Robinson, who had extracted his pencil, got up and bowed formally. "By no means," he said.

Mrs. Denbeigh laughed, and Robinson wondered why he so often amused her.

"May I have a piece of paper to make notes upon?" he asked.

"The paper is on that desk; but why not put them on the margin of the manuscript?"

"I had rather not!"

He spoke so sharply that she looked up in surprise; he had crossed the room, but his back was turned as he bent over the desk. "It is directly in front of you,'" she said.

"But that is all good paper! Any little piece will do."

She laughed again. "Look in the small drawer at the top, to the left."

"What a jolly lot!" exclaimed Robinson, selecting a flattened envelope that proved to be one of his own answers to a dinner invitation. "Denbeigh," he began thoughtlessly, as he returned to his seat, "detested what he used to call parsimony in paper; but there are certain endearing economies that remind one of past pleasures. My grandfather used to give me the backs of all his envelopes to scribble on—but you, you have no right to be stingy; you grew up in an age of opulence—so far as paper goes."

"I inherit my tendencies. My father used to keep that drawer filled, as I do now. The first draft of my two little novels was written on his waste paper."

"You must have been hardly more than a child."

"I was not young at nineteen. Annchen and I are something alike."

"Annchen?" Here was an opening, if he were only able to make use of it!

"Except that Annchen is happier than I was," she added thoughtfully.

"Are you sure of that?" He regretted having spoken as soon as the words had passed his lips. Why should he put his hand to this difficult piece of ploughing? He was not in the habit of arranging the private concerns of his friends. He re-

sented interference in his own affairs, and dreaded any responsibility in other people's. This passed quickly through his mind; but not so quickly but that there had been a break in the conversation that, for Mrs. Denbeigh, was not without significance.

"Why do you think that Annchen is unhappy?" she asked.

"She has great capacity for misery."

"But not opportunity?"

"These summer places offer wonderful facilities for storing up bitterness."

"You forget my sister is there."

"Is she always so watchful?"

"Do you really know anything, or is this merely a habit of generalization? You alarm me; is it intentional?"

"I can't say; I am not sure myself whether I wish to alarm you or not. This is a gratuitous piece of meddlesomeness that I should indulge in for no one under the sun but Annchen; the child is dear to me—we men who have nothing of our own form these imaginary ties."

"What have you seen or heard?"

"I have not seen, and what I have heard has been prompted by affection for Annchen; it was not any idle gossip."

"Bennie Maxwell has told you something! I thought he had something on his mind when he was over here yesterday afternoon."

Robinson's face betrayed nothing.

"I shall write to Arrichat at once."

"If I have needlessly alarmed you——"

"It is better to be alarmed needlessly a thousand times than to make one mistake. I suppose it is Harry again. I thought that he was to be in Newport this summer. It is strange that they have none of them mentioned him!"

"It is Harry. I can't say how long he has been there."

"My sister knows what I think of that!"

Robinson looked extremely pained. He had done this thing in opposition to his own instincts. He was saying to himself that he would let every friend he had go to utter and complete destruction before he again allowed himself to be betrayed into cutting such a figure as he fancied he was making of himself now.

"Shall we begin?" At her cool voice he looked up in amazement.

"Do you wish to go on?" he asked incredulously.

"Did you think that I was going away at once?" she said.

"N–no; but I felt that, in all probability, you would prefer that I should." He took up the papers as he spoke.

"I am anxious to strike while the iron of your resolution is hot. If you leave without hearing this, you will never return; but first I want to say

to you that I find myself quite unable to draw a true portrait of Mr. Denbeigh."

Robinson looked up with interest.

"I am inclined to think," she went on, "that there is some twist in my mind, some curious romancing tendency that unfits me for facts. You know I did write two novels when I was young."

"What is your difficulty?"

"It is this. I have the material ready; I go to work upon a certain period of Mr. Denbeigh's life, say his youth. He already knew that at some future date men would wish to know about him, and he left a great many letters besides these autobiographical sketches and boyish journals perfectly well arranged; there is nothing to do but to edit them properly, and yet—I cannot! I pin myself to the truth with absolute rigidity, and then when I come to read over what I have done—if it is nothing more than mere arrangement—I find that I have placed a new character—not the character he intended—before people. Last week I left the youthful period and took up a later date—the time that I knew of personally—the same thing happened. Yesterday morning I went back to my first work in despair, and, when I read over what I had done, lo, this other Denbeigh had appeared again! And so I turned to you. Bennie Maxwell had told me you were here, and I went out in search of you."

"I am afraid I shall be of very little help."

"Let us begin at the first page," she said, and began to read.

For a few minutes Robinson was so much disturbed at the sight of Denbeigh's familiar, scrawling writing that he could not follow her, but before long his interest in what he was hearing shut out the recollection of his discomfort. "You have hardly changed a word!" he exclaimed, when she paused at the end of a chapter. "You have only put in the necessary links, nothing more, and so far as I can see, further alteration would be undesirable."

"Have you no suggestions, then?"

Robinson made a few corrections reading from the back of his envelope; they were almost entirely verbal, on matters where his taste and hers conflicted. Mrs. Denbeigh put her manuscript aside and folded her hands. He felt that she was disappointed.

"What can I say?" he asked. "The work up to this point is finished and well done; it is in accordance with your—with Mr. Denbeigh's wishes; he has virtually dictated it all to you. What more is to be desired?"

"You do not see what has happened, then?"

See it! Robinson would have liked to shout and laugh. She had given Denbeigh as he had seen him; Denbeigh as the man knew himself to be; not as the man wished himself to be recorded.

"You do see it!"

He was startled; he had not intended to betray himself. "What do you mean?"

"Is that fair?"

"Yes; we all live in separate, idea-tight compartments in this world, and, if I speak, I run the risk of saying something that may disturb your work, may even hurt you——"

"As if that were anything! And as for my work —why not disturb it?"

"Because it is good!" interjected Robinson hastily; "and because it is—true. To be sure I never knew Mr. Denbeigh well until he was a man of over fifty, immensely popular, working himself to death to meet the enormous demands for everything he did—he never refused anything, you know."

"He thought he did."

Robinson was silent. "Why not let him tell his story in his own words?" he asked, after a short study of the papers.

"He did not wish it; what you have there were only rough notes."

"They might almost be published as they are. I can see no objection."

"Do you think he really was like that when he was a boy?"

"Oh, I know!" said Robinson, and then pulled himself up.

"How do you know?"

"My mother knew of him when he was a young man in Coldston. He—has mentioned her here."

"Is she Elinor—of the idyl?"

"He made good use of his imagination. I do not mind; no one—not even a person who knew all the facts—would recognize my mother as the heroine of the story. The truth is it never could have happened."

"It could never have——!"

"I mean that he really didn't know my mother; he had never spoken to her in his life until she and I went to Florence—but all that is nothing; this," he gave the papers a little tap, "makes excellent copy. I shouldn't work over it any longer if I were you. Let me show you." He came and stood near her chair and, bending over, turned the pages of her manuscript. "Strike out this, and this, and place that period a few pages earlier in the story." He indicated what he meant with his pencil. Her eyes followed the point as if hypnotized.

"I shall leave out the part he has called 'The Idyl,' " she said suddenly.

"You needn't. It is impossible that it should ever be fixed upon any real person."

"There are people in Coldston who surely will know that it is intended——"

"The people who remember anything of your husband will not for an instant connect him with my mother. Very likely they will think that it was an incident which occurred at the time of—at the time of—his first——"

"You mean his first marriage," she said in a low

voice. "He has requested that that should not be mentioned. No one knows of it. I discovered it accidentally; but the idyl——"

"Seeing that there never was any idyl," said Robinson, "why trouble yourself?"

"And this—about his dream of returning to buy back his father's estate?"

Robinson smiled. He was still standing behind her.

"I—I could have done it. When—we were first married I wanted to; but he would not hear of it. He was much afraid of putting any compulsion on me. He said that if he could not buy it back himself, he did not wish it done. He was singularly unselfish in the commands he left, and in the care he exercised not to put any burden upon me after his death. So you see—I feel myself all the more bound."

"Denbeigh never did anything obvious," said Robinson thoughtfully. "May he not have foreseen that you would not be able to do this? It was his way of letting it go by default."

"Yes; he used to say: 'Bury me decently, but—bury me! Do not have me exposed to the gaze of every chance beggar by the way.' And yet he had a horror of being forgotten!" She went to the window and stood there, looking down the river toward Great Dulwich.

"I think," said Robinson, and he was distinctly conscious of being a little frightened, "that he is

already very creditably buried—in his own reputation."

She did not turn her head. "Five years ago," she began, "five years ago he died. My sister was with me in those last days, and we came back to America together. She stopped in New York, but I hurried on here alone. I forgot that we had left him behind in a strange city; or, if I remembered, it was only to think that it had been his wish. For nearly a year I had lived in an atmosphere of death; but as I ran through the grounds to the boat-house, it seemed to be blown away—I breathed free again. The world looked good, good! It was autumn, a warm October day, and the colors were deep and rich, the river wound off there toward the city, and the top of your Tower cut the sky above the purple hazy trees of the park. I thought of his sufferings, of his disappointments, of how much he craved praise, and of how little, that was genuine, he had received, and I cried, for the pity of it, looking up at the sky like a grieving child. Then, all at once, I woke to the horror that I was softly and repeatedly thanking God!" She turned about. Robinson was looking at her, his whole face tender with compassion. "Oh! What must you think?" she cried.

He took a step toward her. "And why not thank God?" he said. "The man was free from his sufferings—he had suffered for a long time, and very bravely." It was a cloak which he tried to

wrap about her shamed spirit, to shield it from the scorching smart of self-revelation.

She recognized his intent and smiled, making at the same time a slight, helpless gesture; but she had the strength to desist from explanation. Resolutely she returned to her papers, and Robinson went back to his seat. "Can't you see," she said, "why I feel that I must do this thing myself? When I think of how much he cared, of how much mere recognition—which to others is so a matter of course that they are unconscious of receiving it—meant to him, it seems as if this inability of mine to fulfil his wishes were almost criminal."

"But his wishes have been fulfilled," said Robinson, "it would be difficult to improve this short sketch which he has given of himself. It presents a most charming figure, and in the kind of setting he would have loved."

"But if some one should come to me and demand material for writing a fuller life? What ought I to do?"

"That need not trouble you. In a few years the demand will be less importunate; and, for the present, certainly"— he rose and came toward her, holding out his hand—"I do not believe that I can be of any further help."

She sat, looking up at him. "Why can you not?"

"Advice is only helpful in so far as it confirms

our own opinions; anything further is apt to be confusing."

"But you will come again."

"For something else, as often as you like; but for this—as I told you yesterday—I can be of no use."

"I do not agree! You have begun, you have taken the first step, as it were; it is not fitting that you should retreat, suddenly, as if you had seen a skeleton."

"I have seen nothing, nothing that ought not to be there!" he assured her hastily; and again he offered his hand. "Good-by."

"Why can you not say that you will come to my help, simply and seriously?" she asked, as she put her hand in his.

He took it and held it a moment. His expression was troubled; he wanted to say something, but everything that occurred to him meant either too little or too much.

A dash of gravel struck the outside of the door. There came a sound of flying, reckless feet on the steps, and Annchen stood on the other side of the screen.

"Are you here, Aunt Paula? I want to see you alone, quite alone—oh, is it you, Robin? Never mind, then. They just told me it was a gentleman. I never dreamed it was you!"

## CHAPTER XV

MRS. DENBEIGH started forward. "Is your mother with you?" she said. "Why didn't you let me know that you were coming?"

"I am by myself," said Annchen; "but mamma knows that I am here; I telegraphed to her. I have run away."

"You came all the way down from Arrichat alone?"

Annchen looked guilty. "I meant to come all the way alone, Aunt Paula, indeed I did; but when I got on the train and found that Harry was there, I couldn't see any reason for giving it up, and——"

"Then you came with Harry?" Mrs. Denbeigh's voice was quite expressionless, and she did not look at Robinson.

"He only saw me started, and then went back to Arrichat to tell mamma. We rather quarrelled about it, because he didn't think I ought to come away."

"I am glad he has shown *some* judgment."

"Oh, he has lots of judgment!" said Annchen, with a tinge of bitterness. "He couldn't have shown more if he had been the Bishop himself.

Indeed, I felt for a little while as if there must be a mistake, and I had fallen in with Bishop Langdon masquerading in Harry's body."

A short silence followed, which she seemed to regard in the light of a query.

"I came down because mamma was making herself so unpleasant; she is planning to go to Europe in September."

"This is very sudden," said her aunt.

"And very disagreeable! I don't want to go back to Italy. I am an American; I have a right to live in my own country."

"But what reason has your mother for this decision?" said Mrs. Denbeigh. "I had a letter from her last night, which couldn't have been mailed more than a few hours before you started, and she said nothing whatever of these new plans."

"Never mind reasons; it is bad enough as it stands without them! But I shall not go. There are some things that one has a right to decide for one's self. I will not consent to be ex—ex—ex—what, Robin?" she asked impatiently.

Robinson laughed. "Expatriated?"

"Yes; what a troublesome word! But mamma will not listen to a thing, not a thing!"

"What have you been doing?" said Robinson quietly.

"I have done nothing! But if mamma carries me off to Europe, everybody will begin to suspect

that there was something queer after all. She is the most impossible person I ever encountered—I told her so."

Mrs. Denbeigh looked imploringly at Robinson, who rose and moved toward the door.

"I suppose you think you're very tactful, Robin," said Annchen scornfully, "going off that way; but you're not. I know exactly what Aunt Paula will say to me, and I don't agree with it at all."

Robinson and Mrs. Denbeigh looked at each other and smiled.

"It is no laughing matter," Annchen declared. "And you might help, if you only wanted to." She nodded toward Robinson as she spoke.

"I think that the best thing you can do is to go to bed," said Robinson. "You have travelled all night; you are tired and under great nervous strain; you might be very sorry to-morrow, if I stayed."

Annchen opened her mouth to reply, but he did not wait to hear.

Robinson was relieved to think that Annchen had come away from Arrichat. Her manner of doing so was, perhaps, not desirable, but Mrs. Denbeigh, he said to himself, could manage the child better than her mother could. He was hardly conscious of how much the fact that Mrs. Denbeigh would now remain in Great Dulwich had to do with his approval of Annchen's course. He

walked briskly away from the Gates place looking from right to left with new pleasure in the peaceful beauties of the way, and with a jubilance of feeling that reminded him of his sensations at times of unexpected deliverance from impending care. Those few hours in the boat-house had wrought a change in his view of life; it had become interesting, and he entered the restaurant at luncheon time with the alert step of one who has heard good news.

Bennie was waiting for him. The young fellow's face was gloomy, and he looked up unsmilingly as Robinson took his seat. "Those two have gone beyond the limit, completely beyond the limit!" he said in a low voice, his eyes glancing anxiously toward the other tables, lest some one there should overhear him.

"You have heard?" said Robinson.

"Yes, I found a letter at the office."

"Did you know that Annchen came home this morning?"

"All the way up from Arrichat? See here, she hasn't come with Harry! Nellie wrote me that Harry was leaving."

"They met on the train—not by agreement—Harry evidently did all he could to persuade her to go back to her mother, and when she wouldn't listen to him, he returned to Arrichat himself, to set Mrs. Gates's mind at rest."

"That was not bad of Harry," said Bennie, with

grudging approval. "If he had shown as much sense a little earlier, it would have been better for Annchen. I suppose you know what happened?"

Robinson shook his head.

"They went off to some theatrical performance at the other Arrichat—there are about a dozen Arrichats—it was an afternoon thing, and they were coming back in the sail-boat; but the tide was against them, and they were kept out until an impossible hour at night. Nellie said that Harry was well scared and awfully sorry, but Annchen brazened it out. They had no business to go to the thing, anyhow, and I suppose there is no security, and never will be any, that they won't do it again. When Harry and Annchen get together, they do the first thing that occurs to them—always."

Robinson looked sideways at Bennie. "It sounds rather delightful," he said.

Bennie's face took on an expression of deep displeasure. "As if that were all!" he answered.

"A commendable attitude on your part, but one you may live to regret—I have."

Bennie saw dimly what Robinson meant, and resented it. He felt that he might have been spared that gibe; for Robinson knew well that the first thing which occurred to him—Bennie Maxwell—was forever out of the question! He sat staring far off at nothing, his jaw hard set.

Robinson turned around and began an elaborate

order to the waiter. He knew that if Bennie felt himself observed he would never forgive it; but it was a good seed to sow, and Robinson smiled on beholding himself in the rôle of a corrupter of youth. When luncheon was over Robinson bought a few things that he needed at the restaurant shop, and returned to his rooms carrying them with him. The weather had changed, and the air was heavy with a coming storm; he climbed the stairs slowly, wearied by the excitement of the morning, and feeling, with some depression, that the event of the day had passed.

He opened the door and stood a moment on the threshold, while one or two of the smaller bundles he was carrying dropped to the floor. A woman was sitting in the window-seat, in black silhouette against the light; until Annchen laughed he thought it was Mrs. Denbeigh.

"How funny you look with all those packages, Robin! So domestic! Why didn't you have them sent?"

"It is well for you that I didn't," said Robinson, recovering himself, "for I have here the materials for a cup of tea, which you would not have otherwise had."

"I don't want any tea; I've come down to have a talk with you, away from Aunt Paula."

"I shall be ready to walk back with you in a few minutes, then."

"I am not going back! I want to talk now, here!"

Robinson could see that she was excited; her face was flushed and her hand, when he took it, was hot and dry. "You really ought to go home," he said.

"I don't mean to go home until I've had a talk with you, and there is no use in trying to make me. I really must see you, Robin!"

Robinson thought quickly. "Very well," if you must see me you had better have your cup of tea. I shall have to go downstairs for some hot water."

"That is foolish; you can ring a bell."

Robinson laughed, put his packages upon the table, and ran downstairs to the telephone, where he informed Mrs. Denbeigh of Annchen's whereabouts.

"You say she is with you?" said Mrs. Denbeigh's voice. "I thought that she was upstairs in her room. The carriage it at the door now, I will be down in a few minutes."

Robinson went back to the child, who was lying in his large arm-chair. He did not tell her that he had sent for her aunt, but sat down and waited for her to begin.

"I am not going to be taken abroad in disgrace!" she said. "I am not going to leave this country. I haven't done anything, and I can't see why I should be treated in this way."

She stopped as if expecting an answer; but Robinson was quite silent.

"Did you observe that I said that I hadn't done anything?"

"Yes, I did."

"Well? What have I done, then?"

"You said that you had not done anything."

"If you mean going off with Harry and being kept out until three o'clock in the morning, it was not I that did that—it was the tide."

"Yes; but your mother can't take the tide to Europe with her, I suppose!"

"I'm not in a humor for making fun."

"And if your mother leaves you here this winter, she has no security that the powers of nature may not force you into other compromising situations—at least they may so long as Harry Cogswell is about."

"It might have been anybody else."

"It hasn't been anybody else—so far as you are concerned—since I first came back to Great Dulwich."

Quite unconsciously Annchen's scornful upper lip curved in a little smile. "Yes," she said triumphantly, "I've got that much out of it!"

"Annchen, Annchen, is it worth while? You have been the talk of that wretched little watering-place for an entire season."

"What do I care? I have enjoyed myself—and so has Harry."

"Oh, leave Harry out of the question!"

Annchen looked at him oddly. There was something elfish in the glance, and at the same time tragic. "If that should be impossible!"

"Nothing is impossible at seventeen. Good Heavens, you don't know what real love is! And, given the most fortunate outcome, you are bound to regret this kind of thing in after life."

"We're not in love, we're in fun; and there are no regrets about it!"

"There will be, if your fun causes—Harry's wife—to be the subject of common gossip."

"But you said 'given the most fortunate outcome'!" said Annchen piteously.

Robinson laughed. "In that case, who would 'Harry's wife' be?" he asked.

Annchen's face flushed all over. "Oh!" she said in confusion. "I had never thought of that, never!"

Robinson groaned to himself. What had he done?

"All I cared for," said Annchen dreamily, "was to be let alone; to be with Harry when I pleased."

"Yes?"

"And if I am carried off to Europe—I can't."

"But even if you were engaged to Harry, this running about together would be inadvisable."

"Yes; it would be quite improper, of course; but so long as we are not engaged, I don't see how people can have anything to say."

"The fact remains that people have had a good deal to say."

"All the same—I am not going to be carried off to Europe!"

"In that case, you must promise to see less of Harry."

"Then what is the use of staying at home? There is no one that is as much fun as Harry, and I don't believe he has as good a time with any of the other girls."

Robinson again was silent, but Annchen read his face.

"You are thinking of Margaret Fanshawe! He never has any fun with Margaret! She is always trying to improve him; at least she is when she is not trying to get rid of him."

"Still—" began Robinson.

"You think he is in love with her? I do not say that he isn't; but is being in love fun? I call it perfect wretchedness! Harry is never happy except when I make him forget that Margaret Fanshawe exists. I am staying at home as much on his account as my own—and now that you understand, I want you to make Aunt Paula persuade mamma not to go away."

"What influence have I with your aunt?"

"You might try—and find out."

"Even if I had any, I am not sure that I should care to exert it. There is no excuse for this reckless behavior!"

"What excuse is necessary? Harry and I like to be together, and we are not doing any harm. Taking him away from Margaret is for his own good. She doesn't want him; she only cares for Bennie Maxwell, and Bennie only cares for her; everybody knows it—the perfect Sylvia among the rest! And by the way, if she had let them alone Harry wouldn't have come to Arrichat; but of course when he saw that Bennie and Margaret were having a misunderstanding, he made the most of it. He knows what I think of that!"

"Annchen, what have you said to him?"

"I have told him that I didn't approve. Margaret is not his kind. We were all brought up together, and it looks as if we all belonged together, but we don't. Our kind go in for fun; we have a habit of it, even when we are great. Like my grandfather; he had a talent for amusement, and he carried it along with all his other things. Oh, he amused himself very well, did my grandfather! And papa amused himself—too well. Fancy Professor Fanshawe going in for the kind of things papa did!"

Robinson's lip twitched.

"Those people can't begin to enjoy themselves

the way we do; we put our brains into our amusements, all they do is to drag along their bodies."

At this moment some one knocked at the door. Robinson sprang to his feet and opened it.

"Aunt Paula!" said Annchen rising. "If I had known that you were coming, I should have stayed at home!"

"And if I hadn't known that you were here, child, I shouldn't have come."

"Robin, I believe you went downstairs and telephoned! Do you mean to say you didn't want me?"

"Of course I want you; but at the same time, I felt that I ought to let your aunt know where you were. She might have been anxious."

"And why should Aunt Paula be considered before me? You and I are far older friends than you and she, and I have come up to have a talk with you, and here I am interrupted before I have finished half the things I wished to say."

"I will wait for you," said Mrs. Denbeigh.

"I want to see Robin alone."

"Very well, I will go up to the top of the Tower. I will even shut the trap-door." She and Robinson glanced at each other in amusement.

"You behave as if you were humoring some small baby! I decline to be treated like a child!"

"Then behave as if you were grown up," said Robinson.

Annchen turned away and stood drumming with ner fingers on the window-sash. The two others waited in embarrassment. "She had better go home," said Annchen, without turning her head; "it is going to rain."

Mrs. Denbeigh laughed and went toward the door, Robinson following. "Let me bring a shawl," he said, "and some rugs."

Annchen wheeled about. "Can't she do it herself?" she said angrily. "If you go up there with Aunt Paula you will stay!"

Robinson turned back and looked at Annchen a moment gravely; then, gathering the rugs across his arm, he hurried ahead of Mrs. Denbeigh to lift the trap-door.

The wind was blowing keen and, seaward, a fog was rolling in. Robinson drew a steamer-chair a little nearer to the balustrade and covered Mrs. Denbeigh carefully.

"What does she wish you to do?" she asked, looking up at him.

"Nothing that I can see; she is here merely to announce her ultimatum: she does not intend to go to Europe with her mother. She has also stated that she and Harry are not in love—they are in fun!"

"Ah! But do you suppose she is really unconscious? It is rather a delicate matter—like a saturated solution."

"I was afraid once that, in my awkwardness, I had managed to precipitate it."

"Annchen is very clever; quite clever enough to see the advantages of the position she has taken."

He looked down at her and smiled. "Is that fair?"

Mrs. Denbeigh flushed, but was not offended. From the moment that she had entered the room downstairs there had been in Robinson's every gesture and look an enveloping care and gentleness; it seemed to claim an authority so delicate that she acceded to it without even mental protest.

Robinson went down, closing the door after him, and she was alone. The fog from the sea blew in nearer and nearer, with an occasional dash of rain on her face. She loosened a scarf from about her neck and wound it over the close, small hat she was wearing, in order to tie it down more securely from the wind. From time to time the sun broke through the flying silver-edged clouds, but she was not looking at them. The strong excitement of the morning had left her also weary, too weary to make any attempt to explain to herself her sudden confidence in Robinson; she acquiesced unconsciously, as we do in the results of our deeper, inner decisions. The exquisite gentleness and comprehension of his manner rested and reassured her—he intended that it should—and her feeling of peacefulness and content was so great that she was even

annoyed to have it broken in upon when he raised the trap-door again and came toward her chair. "Have you succeeded in bringing her to reason?" she asked.

Robinson did not answer; he only looked at her with a sort of reproachful displeasure. "You must be careful," he said, after he had unwound the shawls in which he had wrapped her and given her his hand to help her from the chair; "it would be possible at this moment to do a great deal of harm."

Mrs. Denbeigh had a very clear and sudden conviction that she did not want Robinson to be displeased with her; and yet she was quite indignant at his evident determination that Annchen should be taken seriously. As they were going down the stairs, the child's face wore a sweet, subdued look that her aunt observed with an amusement which won another disapproving glance from Robinson. He did not relax his attitude of gravity once while he was putting them into the carriage, and he stood on the steps unsmiling as he watched them drive away.

Annchen's half-understood pain had raised a throng of spectral griefs which, he thought, had long been dead, or else so far subdued that he could send them back to his inner self whenever he chose. They would not leave him now; they stood about and accused him.

Where was the immortality of love? Were

there loves and loves, and one love that lived supreme? One that ruled and rushed to war at the hint of a usurper? Was a man's heart a kingdom, and was it in the power of his tyrant to bring him again to fealty when he would revolt? Say that the new sovereign were the better! Was there, then, a divine right of queens? And, had he the misfortune to be born a legitimist?

He hurried across the great hall and ran without stopping to the top of the Tower. The fog had rolled in a little farther, and was creeping thin and cold among the trees below; beyond the outskirts of the park he could see the road, gray and misty. He waited until Mrs. Denbeigh's carriage appeared; watching it, as it neared a last bend, where some trees bordering the wayside would shortly hide it from view. Some one turned back and waved a farewell toward the Tower. Robinson sat down and took out a cigar; as he lighted the match his hand trembled, and he felt his heart beating hard. "It was Annchen, of course!" he said to himself.

## CHAPTER XVI

ALL that night the wind whistled about the Tower and the storm lashed and beat against the windows. In the morning, when Robinson waked, the damp chill of the air and the steady driving streaks of rain showed him that Great Dulwich had fallen into the clutches of an uncompromising northeaster.

From his breakfast at the restaurant he went to the college library; returning thence to the Tower, with an armful of books, and brow of determination. He had concluded to go to work—there was no more time to waste. Before leaving Great Dulwich the Bishop had requested him to remain for the coming year, as Professor Moncrieff's health was no better. This would necessitate giving two new courses of lectures—Robinson chose to feel himself overwhelmed; he was given to occasional panics of this kind, but this one was unusually severe. For two days the wet weather continued; the Tower was gloomy and cold; but Robinson held fast to his good resolution.

On the third morning, when he was returning

from breakfast, he saw Miller, Mrs. Denbeigh's gardener, waiting on the steps, the rain dripping from his rubber coat and hat. "I have a note here for you, sir," he said, "and Mrs. Denbeigh told me to wait for an answer; but I have got to go over to see the Bishop's man about some peony roots; so, if you don't mind, I'll come back."

Robinson slowly mounted the stairs, turning his note over and over in his hand. At one of the landings he stopped, took out his knife, carefully slit the envelope, and then proceeded on his way, reading as he went. He opened the door of his room and stood looking in, his eyes fixed and thoughtful.

Mrs. Denbeigh asked him to come out to supper that evening. Bennie Maxwell was expected, and Annchen—who had been quite ill with a cold—was to be taken in the carriage to the boat-house, where they were to picnic, for a change. "I hope that you are as tired of the house as we are," wrote Mrs. Denbeigh.

"I will not go," said Robinson. "I am too busy to indulge in festivities—or anything else—especially anything else. Still—" He waited a few moments longer; then he took off his wet cap and solemnly shied it over the head of a bust of Marcus Aurelius that showed, dimly white, in a far corner, and crossing the room to his desk sat down and wrote an acceptance.

It took very hard work for the rest of the day to placate his accusing conscience; but seven o'clock found him walking along the road to Mrs. Denbeigh's. These two last days had been spent in deep depression; he had reviewed and questioned all the turnings and windings by which life's path had brought him to his present point. Looking back, he thought he could see that, at every parting of the ways, he had taken the wrong turn; it was even more than probable that at this very moment he was adding a new mistake to his list; but as he splashed through the mud, he whistled softly to himself, and the rain dripped contentedly on his open umbrella. His term of solitary confinement was over—he was again part of the world—until another conviction.

Mrs. Denbeigh had written to him to go through the grounds direct to the boat-house, and he arrived there in time to see Annchen, wrapped in a heavy cloak, get down from a small closed carriage and run swiftly to the door, where Mrs. Denbeigh and Bennie were waiting for her.

"Did the photography things come down?" she asked.

"Miller is going to bring them when he comes with the rest of the supper," said Mrs. Denbeigh.

"You are not going to take photographs!" Robinson's voice was shocked and grieved as he followed them into the boat-house.

"Bennie and I are only going to print," croaked Annchen, who was very hoarse; "but I can't see why we shouldn't take photographs if we wanted to. You are as bad as Aunt Paula. I think if she had to choose between the two, she would prefer to—chew gum."

Mrs. Denbeigh shook hands with Robinson and turned busily toward a half-unpacked basket which she and Bennie had evidently left when they heard the carriage coming.

"We are going to cook our own supper," said Annchen, falling upon another hamper. "Here, Robin, take this."

For a time, as Robinson moved back and forth, he watched the others curiously. Mrs. Denbeigh and Bennie were soon busy over their chafing-dishes; the perfection of each preparation was a matter of vital importance, and Annchen planned and arranged, her whole mind given to her work; they were "putting their brains into their amusements," as she had told him they did the day she came to the Tower, and their bodies danced in unconscious measure to the tune set by their careless hearts.

Robinson's spirits, also, began to rise—he had forgotten that his spirits knew how—but before long, in the interest and absorption of the game, he even ceased to remember he was playing it. He wrangled with Annchen as to the manner of

setting the table, dictated the ingredients of the sauces to the cooks, and clung with the obstinate fervor of a fanatic to those sustaining principles upon which he founded the dogma of his salad.

Mrs. Denbeigh and Bennie stole a laughing glance at each other. Annchen had insisted upon Robinson's wearing a wide, smock-like apron, which she had brought down to protect her dress from the photographic chemicals; but, although he saw both glance and smile, Robinson had more serious matters to consider than trivial details of personal appearance. What was an apron, more or less, to a man who had the responsibility of a supper on his shoulders?

When the supper was over, Robinson sat down with Mrs. Denbeigh in front of the fireplace in the large room; his high spirits had moderated; but he was amused and happy, and not too self-forgetful to be unable to recognize the causes of his content. Annchen and Bennie were printing pictures in the next room; and every few minutes one or the other of them appeared, demanding admiration or sympathy for the results of their work.

"Do you often do this?" asked Robinson.

"Not often; but Annchen was getting gloomy."

"The wind is rising again." Robinson turned toward the glass door that led to the porch. "That was lightning, I think."

"It has been a most depressing storm."

"You felt it so? I thought that it was only my—conscience."

"It must be a relief to you to know that, after all, it was the weather."

"In my case, the weather was merely the predisposing cause. I should have had to have it out with myself sooner or later. I ought to be thankful that the blues and the northeaster fell in at one time, instead of having some charming mood ruined by a gloomy day; or the sunshine turned bleak, through the cold perversity of a lagging spirit."

Mrs. Denbeigh smiled, and, stooping forward to a basket near the fireplace, gathered up a handful of pine-cones; then, leaning back in her chair, she threw them one by one on the blazing logs. The wind whistled down the river, and shook the doors and sashes in their casings; the rain began to drum on the roof and dash against the window-panes. "What do you do, there in the Tower, when the weather is like this?" she asked.

"I have been getting up my lectures for next year; and trying to reconcile my conscience to teaching again in those schools in the city. One of the men would like them if I give them up; but he wants them permanently; and I have a feeling that I ought to hold on to them until Maxwell is better. I had a talk with him before he left; he thought

that he would be able to undertake them again at the end of another year—when I return to Italy."

"You are going to leave Great Dulwich?"

"My appointment is only until Moncrieff is well enough to begin work again."

"Will he ever be well enough? I met his brother early in the summer; he seemed to have very little hope."

"As I remember Moncrieff, he was a strong man, rather rugged."

"His wife was delicate and needed all sorts of things that cost: a warmer climate, travel, change, specialists; and they say that, in the effort to provide them, he worked unceasingly and under constant strain."

"She is not living now?"

"No; she died a little over a year ago. He broke down suddenly then; but he would not give up. All last winter was one continuous struggle, until just before you came."

The fire had burned to bright coals. Mrs. Denbeigh had stopped throwing on the pine-cones. Robinson felt under no obligation to talk; he was not even conscious that there had been silence when he spoke at last. "It is a hard life, a hard, thankless life! I am glad that I never committed myself, by any binding obligations, to live it."

"But I thought you had been preparing for a

professorship in Great Dulwich during all these years."

"And that I was bitterly disappointed in not having received one long ago," he added dryly. She reddened—Denbeigh had told her that—but Robinson did not see; his eyes were fixed on the bed of coals. All at once he rose, took a log from the wood basket and laid it across the andirons. "Teaching," he said, filling his hands full of cones and going back to his seat, "for the mere sake of teaching has never been a profession that commended itself to me. A man has no right to go into it unless he possesses such a store of treasure that he can give and give—with both hands, out of a full heart—for the love of giving and pure joy in the gift."

"Then—who is going to teach?"

"I hope not I!" sighed Robinson. "The acquirement of knowledge, with no other object in view but that of pouring it out again on to the heads of youth and then trying to rub it in, is a species of personal service that is—well—degrading!"

"Degrading—to whom?—to which?"

"Oh, to both, to both!" said Robinson, laughing. "Teaching, like all the essentially altruistic professions, is death to the second-rate."

"What an excellent profession for the abolition of the majority!"

Robinson knelt on the rug and began to build a careful edifice of cones on top of the smouldering log. "There is a spiritual death," he said.

"Is that all?" she murmured regretfully.

"It is too much." He got up and slowly went back to his seat, where he bent forward, with his elbows on his knees and his hands clasped, waiting for the upspringing of the blaze. Mrs. Denbeigh watched him, amused at his unconsciousness.

"But Mr. Moncrieff was not second-rate, neither is—Mr. Maxwell," she said in a low voice.

"No—there is nothing second-rate about those two; unless it be the way in which they are paid—it is that which is killing them, through overwork. Fine, beautiful instruments," Robinson went on dreamily, "fitted to shape the souls of men; but all hacked and hewn and rendered useless for their nobler employment!" He sat and thought, staring at the smoking pile of pine-cones. It came to him that the Tower had been very lonely.

All at once Annchen's voice came in from the other room. "It is not discriminating to stand up for other people in season and out, the way you do, Bennie. People are always sure beforehand what you will say, so nobody cares a pin for your judgment."

"If you think that I don't see her faults, you are mistaken."

"I don't believe you see one! If you did, you would not say that this was like her."

"It is like her soul."

"No, it isn't! This is only the way she thinks she looks when she gets people to turn themselves inside out for inspection; she calls it 'understanding them.' "

"She does understand, and she helps lots of people! As for the turning things inside out, that is a matter of individual taste; there are people who can't clean house without it."

"They needn't do it all on the front lawn!"

"She doesn't ask them to! As for my own spring cleanings—she has never even suspected I had them!"

"That is why you have never fallen out with her—she hasn't had a chance to blunder into places where you don't want her."

"People you love can't blunder in."

"Now, Bennie, when you know she did, with you and——"

"Please don't blunder into the developer with that stick you took out of the 'hypo,' " said Bennie calmly.

Mrs. Denbeigh looked at Robinson in amusement, which suddenly gave place to alarm. "Good Heavens!" she said. "We are eavesdropping!"

"Bennie Maxwell remains where he was when I

knew him eighteen years ago," said Robinson. "He may have grown up; but my perception of the fact has not yet overtaken his present development; I decline to feel the slightest guilt at overhearing the innocent remarks of a child of five, however intelligent."

"We hear every word you say! Do you want to see this picture?" said Annchen, coming in with a piece of dripping photographic paper in her hand.

Mrs. Denbeigh studied it a moment, holding it carefully away from her dress, and then handed it quietly to Robinson.

It was Miss Langdon, standing, looking upward; light seemed to stream from her white dress and shining hair, and above her shoulders rose a broad sweep of gauzy, half-spread wings. Behind her was a narrow line of sea and cliff; and tall lilies rose all about her knees.

"How under the sun did you do it?" said Mrs. Denbeigh.

"Bennie and I faked it a little, but really, it was a freak to begin with. The window behind her had been taken out to be cleaned, and the curtains left —it is they that make the wings—and all those flowers had been brought in to be arranged. The sun was shining through the big porch door, and I thought she would never look so much like an angel again, so I snapped her."

"She is like it!" Bennie had come to the door-

way, and was looking down at another wet print in his hand. "She always has been like it!"

Annchen leaned over Robinson's shoulder. "Did she ever look that way to you, Robin?" she inquired.

"Yes; she always looked that way to me."

Annchen took the picture from him and went back to the other room, closing the door with a bang behind her.

Robinson bent forward to Mrs. Denbeigh, lowering his voice carefully. "Has Mrs. Gates written anything to you of Maxwell?" he asked.

"He is not improving."

Robinson's eyes opened wide. "Is he worse?"

"He does not gain strength—what are they going to do?"

"Is it so serious?"

"You know how it has been in Mr. Moncrieff's case."

"Ah, but Moncrieff—Moncrieff's case is different! There was nothing about Maxwell that could even suggest such a possibility."

"Complete nervous exhaustion in both. But Mr. Moncrieff has nothing to worry about. His brother is a man of means, of very large means."

"A man like Moncrieff does not like to be dependent upon anybody, not even his brother."

"That is better than if he had six people, more

or less dependent on him, and with nothing—nothing, to fall back upon."

"Do you mean to say that those two men have given all their lives to this work, and now they are destitute?"

"I don't know what you would call it," said Mrs. Denbeigh—there was something impatient in her tone—"but beyond a small insurance, the Maxwells have nothing. Mr. Moncrieff, his brother told me, had quite a large sum in some form of insurance that was to come to him at sixty; but he was compelled to use it in his wife's last illness."

Robinson leaned forward again in his chair, doing a problem in mental arithmetic. With a professor's salary and the sum which his small property brought to him annually, would a man, at his age, be justified in beginning on this path? These other men had trodden it, not successfully in a certain sense of the word. Would he be willing to exchange with them: their cares for his security; their gains for his loss?

The pine-cones broke into a blaze with a sudden puff.—Robinson thought of how he might have had a place of his own, a still room to sit in of a stormy night, with deep shadows and dancing reflections, and young voices sounding from behind a closed door. He wished for it, beyond a doubt; but had he ever wished for it enough? Would he be willing to pay the price that Moncrieff had paid?

Probably at some time Moncrieff's fireside had shone as bright as this! And Bennie in there, he was one of Maxwell's assets. At that moment Robinson felt that he would be willing to pay dear for a Bennie of his own. But the question was, how dear? "If it were a matter that concerned nobody but one's self," he said, still looking into the fire, "a man might be justified; but the trouble is he drags in too many helpless people with him."

Mrs. Denbeigh had not followed his thoughts, and for a moment she looked at him in amused surprise. "Is it a cryptic utterance?" she said.

"You know what I mean. Here is D'Orsey and here am I; we cut very poor figures beside these married men, with their cares, their dignity, their self-sacrifice. But in spite of that I cannot help feeling that I am glad that I have dragged no woman through this life of narrowness and uncertainty."

"Are you sure you mean that?"

"I do not know; when I think of the woman's side of it, I am sure; when I think of my own side, I am uncertain. I suppose every man covets a home, family, happiness."

"We all covet that," said Mrs. Denbeigh; but there was a look of absent-mindedness in her face, as if she were listening to something outside.

"What is it?" said Robinson.

"Something that sounded like wheels," said Mrs.

Denbeigh, and the next moment the door was opened and Tom Bent, dripping with moisture, stood in the doorway.

Amid all the greetings and questions and talk which followed, Robinson felt as if his private dream had been invaded. The evening, up to that moment, had been all his own; now Bent, fresh from the outside world, with other interests and other news, made him sensible of having talked "shop," of having been narrow and limited. He wished that he had not stayed in Great Dulwich that summer, that he had spent his vacation elsewhere than in the Tower! What a very small amount of the academic life sufficed to make a man provincial! That he was so shut out from the world in which the rest of them apparently lived galled him. Bent had news from every one: from Mrs. Gates, from Miss Langdon, from the Bishop, and from the Cogswells, who lived at a summer place farther up the coast, called Ware. He had been playing tennis in an international tournament; he had been engaged in some large business transaction, with the details of which Mrs. Denbeigh seemed entirely conversant. He had met certain political authorities who had given him special information; he had, in short, a thousand living, breathing interests that made Robinson feel as if he were a crabbed recluse, a weak scholar, a man of inaction, who had never arrived at any definite

port. Robinson, in his soul, was possessed of a clear conviction—the same that comforts every scholarly man—that his practical side was merely held in voluntary abeyance. But the contrast between himself and Bent deprived him of this spurious consolation. The weariness and discouragement that he had felt in the morning returned, and he motioned secretly to Bennie that it was time for them to leave.

"Don't go, Robinson," said Bent. "I have come out on purpose to see you as well as Mrs. Denbeigh. Paula, did you know that the upper river was very high? It is almost as high as it is in April. What do you say to going up to Durham in the morning and coming down in my canoes? I have two of them at the farm, and it is going to be clear to-morrow."

"I have never learned to row a canoe," said Robinson.

"*Paddle*," said Bennie softly.

"All the rest of us can," said Mrs. Denbeigh. "Annchen, how about your cold? Bennie, of course you will come?"

"I suppose I could take a day off," said Bennie doubtfully.

"Can you be at the Tower to-morrow morning at eight? Is that too early for you, Robinson?"

"But I should only be a dead weight! If I could row the thing——"

"*Paddle*," murmured Annchen.

"You can learn. We'll teach you," said Bent.

Mrs. Denbeigh had been watching Robinson's face. "He does not want to learn," she said, laughing.

"But he must; he shall!" said Annchen.

"I have always had a prejudice against those things. If I were alone in one I shouldn't mind taking my life in my hand; but to row——"

"Oh, *paddle!*" they all cried together.

"Very well, so be it," said Robinson.

"Is it eight, then?" asked Bent.

"Thank you, I am vanquished." Robinson rose, and Bennie, who in Margaret's absence, held all amusements with a light hand, followed his example with alacrity. He had enjoyed himself while he was there; but he was also quite willing to go home and rest before the exertions of the following day.

As he and Robinson trudged toward the park in the wet, Bennie talked unceasingly of Bent's interests and Bent's talents, with a genuine, loving admiration. The little sight of the man had cheered him quite as much as it had depressed Robinson.

"I believe it really is going to be clear to-morrow," the latter said, looking up at the sky.

"Oh, yes! Tom Bent never makes a mistake about the weather."

Robinson, who was weatherwise in his own conceit, continued to look doubtfully at the clouds over his left shoulder.

"That is not the right direction to look," said Bennie.

Robinson knew it, but he did not acknowledge it.

"What a pity," said Bennie thoughtfully, when they had walked another rod or so in silence, "that Tom and Mrs. Denbeigh couldn't have hit it off better together!"

"Why do you say that?"

There was such extreme annoyance in Robinson's tone that Bennie glanced at him quickly. "It is not gossip," he said; "they were engaged long ago, before she went over to Europe and was married to Denbeigh."

"I thought Bent was interested in Sylvia Cogswell."

"I suppose he is; but he and Mrs. Denbeigh are made for each other," said Bennie regretfully.

"He is a delightful fellow; but—but does it seem to you that he would be likely to make a woman like Mrs. Denbeigh—happy?"

"It would take a great many kinds of men to make Mrs. Denbeigh entirely happy," said Bennie, with one of those youthful moments of insight that always deprived Robinson of his breath; "but you can be sure of one thing—whatever she finally decides upon, it will be of another variety from Den-

beigh. She's had enough of the ethical and the learned to last her, quite enough!"

The iron scroll-work of the park gates showed dim in the flare of the lamp across the way. Beyond them the trees were black in an impenetrable mass.

"Good-night, Bennie," said Robinson, and swung off into the shadows.

## CHAPTER XVII

FOR the last weeks of that vacation Robinson, with a diligence and assiduity that surprised himself, played. The dissatisfaction with himself that had been slowly sapping his courage disappeared. It was as if, in that canoe trip down the swollen river, the stillness, the unexacting companionship, the smooth motion, the friendly understanding, the mirroring water, and the deep blue of the storm-washed sky had entered into his soul and made peace. His thoughts were full of hopes of impossible happiness, and he dreamed away his time, as a boy dreams. In moments of solitude he laughed at himself, but it was a laughter that trembled so near to sorrow that he dared not indulge in it often, lest he send the balance the other way.

Miss Langdon saw a change in him the first time they met, and felt an unaccountable heaviness of heart. It was at a party given by the Fanshawes. During the first of the evening Robinson had been dutifully busy; but his conscience having at last released him, he had abandoned his obligatory politenesses to take supper with her at a small table

set conveniently back in a bay window. "The summer has done you good," she said.

"And you also. People speak of you as if you had risen from the dead."

"I was nearly well before, only they had not noticed it because I was so much at home. This winter I am going to try to see more of the world. I have vegetated long enough. What a delightful party this is! Mrs. Fanshawe always gives one every autumn."

"It is the first real college party that I have been to. I feel as if I were back in my senior year."

"That is the peculiarity of Mrs. Fanshawe's parties. We are all asked together, old and young, in a way that has almost passed out of memory in Great Dulwich. All the lonely and plain and unfashionable folk are invited. Mrs. Fanshawe manages to unearth people that have not appeared for years, and we remember how we used to love them, and are so glad to see them that we go home saying that we intend to have just such a party ourselves —but we forget it before the winter is half over."

Robinson looked to where his hostess was moving busily about—redistributing professors and breaking up knots of bashful students, who got together behind her back every time they were parted, like the waters of a stream in the wake of a boat. Here and there a learned man was seized upon and shuffled dexterously into a group of

ladies, who gracefully rearranged their conversation to suit his imperfect needs; but when he sauntered on again they resumed the interest of their original topic, and tried not to look relieved. The buzz of talk was loud, and Robinson and Miss Langdon drew farther into the window in order to hear each other.

"What makes those three men standing in the doorway there look so unhappy?" he inquired.

"They have left something undone at home; there is always a fine flavor of adjournment about a Great Dulwich party. These men were all dragged here under protest."

"Yet you go away with your mind made up to have one like it?"

"Because of the sweetness of it! When we go back to our houses we are quiet and pleased, untired; we think kindly thoughts of our host and hostess and of each other—I quite love Mr. Fanshawe after one of his wife's parties."

"She ought to give one every day!"

"Yes, I seldom love him at any other time; but to-morrow, when I think of this evening, I shall smile, and have tears in my eyes! See that dear little bride over there in her wedding-dress; she confided to me in the drawing-room that her husband told her to put it on, by all means, as she would very likely never have another opportunity of wearing it."

"But term began only two weeks ago, and I am almost snowed under with teas and dinners—I, a quiet man!"

"Still, we are very old-fashioned."

Robinson smiled at her suddenly, then glanced away. "There are some of us here who seem to me very magnificent—I wonder if I might assume the privilege of an old friend and tell you what a beautiful gown you have on?"

She was wearing a heavy silk dress, of that peculiar shade of lavender which looks pink at night. Her arms and neck were bare, and over her shoulders she had a cape of beautiful old lace. She smiled and leaned across the table. "There is something I want to say to you," she began, but at that moment the Bishop came up and stood in front of them.

"Good-evening, Mr. Robinson?" he said, with the tone of interrogation which always made Robinson feel as if he were called upon to account for himself. "The carriage is here, Sylvia."

"Pray, papa—" said Miss Langdon.

The Bishop looked startled. "If you wish to remain, I will drive home first and send the carriage back for you," he said coldly.

"There are so many people with whom I have not yet spoken."

The Bishop bowed gravely to Robinson and went away.

"Something is wrong," said Miss Langdon, looking after him thoughtfully.

Robinson wondered uncomfortably if the Bishop might not have been displeased to find him sitting in the window with his daughter. "Perhaps the boys are in mischief," he hazarded.

"That may be; but papa leaves all those things to Professor Fanshawe—is it my imagination, or was he really so pale?"

To Robinson's memory the Bishop's face presented itself, white, with deep-sunken, anxious eyes; but he was annoyed with the Bishop, and so said: "I see no change." Hitherto Robinson had always acquiesced in any kind of treatment the Bishop chose to bestow upon him; but of late his Dulwich perspective had altered. The Bishop did not loom so large as he had formerly, and Robinson demanded the treatment of an equal.

"I am so glad you were here when Annchen came back from Arrichat," said Miss Langdon, breaking in upon Robinson's ungracious thoughts. "I was on the point of speaking of it when papa came up."

"Yes."

"She is at the restless age when it is so hard to know just what to do for her. A word too much or too little may make such an incredible difference! I have hardly dared use my own influence."

"Don't say anything to her!" said Robinson

hastily. "Not that I undervalue your influence" —he was startled by the hurt expression of her eyes—"far from that; but Annchen may be goaded to unreasonableness by the slightest interference."

Miss Langdon rose. "I had no thought of interfering with Annchen," she said, moving away. Robinson followed uncomfortably in her wake for a few steps, and then drew back, watching her as she stopped to talk to one group of people after another on her way down the room; at last, seeing her bid Mrs. Fanshawe good-night, he hurried forward and did the same, but when he reached the hall Miss Langdon had gone upstairs.

Robinson, filled with compunction, waited below, talking to several of the men, and hoping to set things straight with her when she should come down. One after another of the professors and their wives went away, and Robinson at last found himself alone; then there was a rustle of silk; he looked up and saw Miss Langdon and Margaret together. Margaret's head was held high; she looked pale and slightly forbidding. Miss Langdon was flushed and tremulous. Robinson wondered what had happened.

"Has the carriage come back, Mr. Robinson?" Miss Langdon said. "If it has, will you let me drive you as far as the Tower?"

Robinson took Margaret's hand and looked questioningly into her eyes; her lip twitched, and

she slightly shook her head. Then he turned away and called the carriage, and he and Miss Langdon got in together.

"Drive slowly, Connor," she said. "The night is so beautiful," she added, turning to Robinson.

He looked absent-mindedly at the moon. "I hope," he said haltingly, "that you understood what I said about Annchen. You know her quite as well as I do, and I reproach myself with my officiousness."

"I had not thought of that. I was troubled about my father, and so came away. As for Annchen, things have changed between us. It is always the way. We lose our hold on the young, I cannot tell how, or why, or even when; we think them ours, we flatter ourselves that we help them, guide them; and then they are gone! It is one of the sorrows of middle age."

"Then you still stand a chance of avoiding it."

"No, I have not escaped. They have all deserted me. Even Sylvia and Harry, for whom I have spent myself so freely! I have sacrificed more to those children than my sister Anna ever thought of doing. In a way, I have had only them; but they seem to have no sense of the tie that exists between us."

"Surely you expect their mother to come first?" hazarded Robinson in a tone of puzzled wonder.

"Which is nearer, a child's real mother or the mother of its soul? Harry and Sylvia have not

a single intellectual interest which they do not owe to me."

"But, after all, what claim have you? That you gave was a matter of your own choice. They have not asked for anything."

"But they have. They have asked for help, which they never took; for advice, which they never followed."

"So much the better; it is by no means certain that it would be altogether desirable for them either to take the help or follow the advice. All that concerns us is to offer them our best—with an open hand, as we feed the birds—they can fly away afterward if they choose."

Miss Langdon made no answer. The horses were going at a walk slowly down the broad path of the park, now in the shadow, now in the moonlight. Robinson turned to look at her; she was raising her handkerchief to her eyes. "I am very foolish," she said, trying to laugh.

But he had seen the glitter of tears.

"They have meant so much to me, and one after another they have deserted me!" she mourned. "Only with Bennie do I still feel that I have some influence; I have his confidence. In a certain sense I am first with Bennie."

"Ah, take care, take care!"

"Of what?"

"Of trying to be first—of wishing to know too much. They see it and resent it."

"What did Margaret say to you?"

"Nothing—you saw—we did not speak."

"But you felt—you imagined——"

"I imagined nothing but what you would have me—I beg you to believe that."

They were nearing the Deanery, and at the sight of the familiar driveway the horses broke into a trot; in another moment Connor drew up by the porch. Robinson, with a start of annoyance, saw the Bishop coming down the steps to help Miss Langdon out, and sprang from the opposite side of the carriage. "Good-night, and thank you," he said. "I shall go across the lawn; good-night, Bishop Langdon!"

The Bishop spoke his name and hurried forward in front of the horses, following him for a short distance; but Robinson moved so swiftly that he was almost instantly lost in the black shadows of the hedge.

Miss Langdon stood waiting for her father to return. She was sad and dissatisfied. With Robinson, also, she felt that she had ceased to be first. She wondered what it was that she had lost; what charm she had once possessed had she allowed to slip through her fingers?

"I wish I could have made him hear," said the Bishop, slowly mounting the steps. "Sylvia, come into the house. There is something terrible that I must tell you."

## CHAPTER XVIII

ROBINSON left Miss Langdon with a sense of dissatisfaction equal to her own. He was annoyed at the Bishop's presence on the porch. Had he shown any desire to thrust himself upon the Bishop or upon his family?

He passed by the door of the Tower and went northward, with no very distinct plans beyond a consciousness that Mrs. Denbeigh, who had been at the Fanshawes', was not likely to prolong unduly her stay. His ruffled temper carried him rapidly over the ground, and he was already halfway to the Gates place when he heard some one running behind him.

"Are you out for a walk?" called Bennie Maxwell. "May I come with you?"

"I really don't know what I am out for, the party has left me with a taste for—society. I thought that if I met Mrs. Denbeigh I might ask to be allowed to come in if it wasn't too late."

Bennie, who had fallen into step beside him, seemed to make an effort to wrench his mind to a contemplation of Robinson's point of view. "We are not apt to be too late at Mrs. Denbeigh's."

"It is the one house I know in this part of Great

Dulwich where you can with any safety drop in after nine o'clock and not find the people in bed."

"They hadn't left the Fanshawes' when I came away, but I was too sad to stay any longer. This horrible news about Professor Moncrieff put me out of tune."

"Of Moncrieff?"

"You had not heard, then?"

"No, nothing. Is he worse?"

"He is dead."

They walked on a few paces in silence. "If I have not misunderstood the nature of Moncrieff's illness," said Robinson, "it is a blessing that he is gone."

"Not to have gone in this way! Not in this way!"

Robinson stood still. "In what way?"

"He—killed himself this morning."

Robinson reeled, and Bennie put out his hand to steady him. "I did not think you cared so much," he said.

"It is the shock."

"Yes, it affected the Bishop in the same way. He got the telegram just before he left the Fanshawes'; I happened to be with him. I do not think I ever saw him so moved." Bennie spoke wonderingly. He was fond of Professor Moncrieff, but the emotion shown by the older men seemed a little overdone.

Robinson's face suddenly burned. The Bishop's puzzling behavior was accounted for. "Moncrieff had no family—I suppose that, after all, he had a right to dispose of his life as he chose," he said musingly.

"He had not!" Bennie spoke angrily. "He has made it more difficult for every man that knew him to bear his own burden."

"Moncrieff stood alone; and with this horrible fate stealing in upon him day after day, he had every excuse for getting out of the world."

"Think of what he has done! Consider, for example, the effect of his death upon my father!"

"Why do you say that? You have no reason to think——"

"I can't help being afraid; I wish I knew. Sometimes I think I will go and ask Dr. Saltus what he told my father in the spring."

"Better not!"

Bennie turned on him. "Do you know?"

"Of course not; but if Saltus's verdict is adverse, the knowledge will merely tie your hands with anxiety."

"It may be favorable."

"Very likely it is; and so long as you don't know anything, you will always believe the best. As for your father, he would never—do that!"

"You know the end that was before Moncrieff?"

"Insanity—or worse."

The two strode on, Bennie so wrapped in his own troubled thoughts as to be scarcely conscious of Robinson's presence; suddenly he awakened to the unusual nature of his confidences. "I hadn't meant to tell you; but when I saw you ahead of me, I was running before I knew it."

They had come to the Gates place, and, instead of turning toward the house, they went down the road to the boat-house, and, going a short way beyond it, walked out upon the bridge that spanned the river above the falls.

"Do you think your father apprehends——"

"I dare not think! Only this morning he said to me, 'All I ask is not to be a care and a burden upon your hands!' I know Saltus has told him something."

"If Saltus feared the worst, I don't believe he would tell him."

Suddenly the young fellow covered his face with his hands and remained silent, leaning on the railing of the bridge. Robinson put his arm about his neck and the two waited a long time. The waterfall below filled all the air with sound; the river stretched off, a long, sparkling sheet. A canoe from Mrs. Denbeigh's boat-house put out into the moonlight, and two people paddled softly away, down stream.

Robinson's start of annoyance roused Bennie. He took down his hands and looked out over the

water. "There are Harry and Annchen again," he said dully, "and with everybody talking."

"They seem to be enjoying themselves," said Robinson, as Annchen's laugh came back to them above the noise of the rapids.

"Yes; but it is a pity that they shouldn't know that they are enjoying themselves. Harry is uncomfortable and Annchen defiant; they are doing this in the face of everything, and they don't seem to get a bit of good out of it. Now, if I were off there—but what's the use of talking—I am not there, and I probably never shall be. After all, the best friend for a fellow of my age is a woman fifteen or twenty years older than himself."

"You are wrong. The best friend for a fellow of your age is the one he likes most, and she is not apt to be middle-aged. You may thank your youthful stars for that!"

"Everybody says——"

"I know; they say that it is a liberal education, an uplifting, a privilege; but ten to one it is an unwholesome influence. You young people ought to look out of your own eyes and not through ours. The lenses, after forty, begin to flatten."

Bennie leaned down again upon the parapet. "Friendships with the younger women are beyond the reach of some of us," he said, with an attempt at indifference. "They make ties, you know. An exclusive friendship with a girl of your own age

is a promise that you may never be able to fulfil—you cut off her chances with other fellows."

"What if she doesn't care for chances with other fellows?" said Robinson impatiently. "Have a little more faith!"

"Oh, I've got faith enough!" said Bennie; "at least, I have in my own constancy. But suppose a man cared for a girl and felt that she might, in time, get to caring for him; suppose he was a fellow who never would be able to make any great mark in the world? If he really cared for her, hadn't he better sheer off before it was too late."

"Some one has been putting this nonsense into your head, Bennie," said Robinson irritably.

"It doesn't need anybody to put it—it grows of itself."

"Then I think it had better be weeded up."

"A man has no right to bind a girl to him by an indefinite engagement."

"Perhaps he hasn't; but, on the other hand, has he the right, by fearing too much, to sacrifice not only her happiness and his, but their characters? I have known people to deteriorate straight through life because they were afraid to take any risks. I have known it to my cost!" he added in a lower voice.

"You wouldn't advise a fellow to go in, hit or miss? Think of me, for example. I've got to work all I can in order to put by something for the

rainy day that is soon sure to come; all those youngsters at home have got to be educated. We can't keep things within my father's income. It's expensive here in Great Dulwich."

"But surely——"

"I tell you, we don't know how—that's the long and short of it. My mother's father was rich; she never learned economy, and there was always the prospect of money ahead. When grandfather lost his property and my great-uncle William left all his money to his second wife, the prospect was suddenly withdrawn. We've got to learn to economize, and we try with all our might; but I must confess it is a difficult art for some of us to master."

Robinson declined to be led off in the direction of economical discussion. "Don't let anything come between you and happiness, Bennie!" he said; "and make up your own mind about your own affairs. We older people try to do it for you; we tell you what is suitable, we analyze your temperaments——"

"Yes, that's it—but—listen!" From over the water came a sound of music.

"Has Annchen taken her violin in the canoe?" said Robinson. "What madness!"

Bennie leaned forward. "They have landed on the little island."

The melody rose through the night. "Do you suppose Harry will understand that?"

"Not unless he chooses." Bennie straightened up and turned his face to the road. "I must go home," he said; "lately I always feel that I may be needed."

They recrossed the bridge, and as they were going by the boat-house they saw a white figure coming toward them in the moonlight and shadow that checkered the path that led from the house.

"Mrs. Denbeigh," whispered Bennie.

She hesitated a moment, seeing two men, and then, noticing the white of their evening shirts, she came forward with confidence. "O Bennie and Mr. Robinson! I am so glad it is you! Is Annchen in the boat-house?"

"We have come from the bridge," said Robinson. "I am afraid Annchen is over on the island."

"Is that she playing over there—alone?"

"I think Harry is with her," said Bennie.

"They must come back! Bennie, take this whistle; sound it four times from the boat-house."

Bennie hurried off, and soon the shrill call was four times repeated. The music went on for a moment, then paused. Bennie whistled again, and was answered by a wild series of scrapes and shrieks and derisive runs. Robinson laughed.

"She must be brought back," said Mrs. Denbeigh.

"Are there two canoes?" said Robinson.

"Only one now, the other one is broken. There!

That is what I feared." From up the river came a sound of loud voices, singing and calling. "Some of the students out there have heard her."

They turned toward the boat-house and, going down the steps, went out upon the balcony that jutted over the water.

"Shall I whistle again, Mrs. Denbeigh?" said Bennie.

"No, I think I see the canoe."

The three waited, and before long Harry and Annchen came into sight, chased by two boats loaded with laughing young men. Fortunately Harry knew the current better than his pursuers, and shot into the shadow of the boat-house. In a moment or two more Annchen climbed the steps and appeared upon the balcony. "Lovely night," she said. "Good-evening, Robin. Hello, Bennie!"

The pursuing boats came closer, and one of the young fellows began a serenade. "Stand back, Annchen," said Mrs. Denbeigh. "Do you think they knew you?"

"I know they didn't. I had my head turned away from them all the time."

"Very well. Go up to the house—quickly!" seeing Annchen hesitate.

The young serenader still sang on unsteadily, below; and Mrs. Denbeigh walked quietly into the full light of the moon.

With an exclamation of annoyance Robinson

followed, but faltered and stopped as Bennie laid a detaining hand upon his arm.

"Robin and Mrs. Denbeigh, by all that's holy!" said a boy's voice.

"It's too late now," whispered Bennie, giving him a slight push forward; then, following, he coolly leaned over the balustrade. "I really appreciate this compliment, my dear Edward," he called distinctly; "coming from my own brother, it is a most touching tribute!"

There was a confused laugh, the singer broke off abruptly, and the young men rowed away. "Who would have believed it of old Robin?" said one of them, regardless of the carrying properties of water.

"Shall we go up to the house?" said Mrs. Denbeigh. Robinson followed her silently. Bennie made some effort at conversation; but Mrs. Denbeigh answered him in monosyllables, and he shot away willingly to join Annchen and Harry, when he heard them calling him.

"I must apologize for this most stupid complication," said Robinson stiffly. "It is unpardonable that you should be compelled to pay for my momentary forgetfulness of—my natural sphere of usefulness."

She turned toward him, slightly biting her lip. "Your sphere of usefulness?"

"The background."

"Oh! Why will you say such things?"

"If I had kept back," said Robinson gloomily, "they would have thought that Harry was with you. They all know that he plays the violin. I was stupid; I do not wonder that you are annoyed."

"I am annoyed with Annchen and Harry, not with you. The more I exert myself to prevent their appearing conspicuous, the stranger and wilder things they do. You are not going home? You have not been near us for two weeks."

Mrs. Denbeigh crossed the terrace and entered the house. Robinson followed her to the door of the drawing-room, where Annchen stopped him, and Mrs. Denbeigh, passing them with a word of excuse, disappeared into the dining-room at the other end of the hall.

"Robin," said Annchen, "don't go into the drawing-room for a minute; there is something I want to show you."

"Something interesting?"

An impish expression flitted across Annchen's face. "Come around outside," she said, "it is something that you never will have a chance to see again." She led him back down the hall, across the terrace, along a deep covered porch at the side of the house, and opened a glass door into a dark room behind the drawing-room. "Wait a minute," she said, "I am going in to turn on the electricity."

As Robinson followed her into the lighted room,

he started at seeing on the wall an enormous portrait of Denbeigh in all the glory of an Oxford gown. He looked at it a moment thoughtfully. "Where did he get the D.C.L.?" he said to Annchen.

"He never got it at all; that is a fancy costume —Cardinal Wolsey, or Richelieu, or something."

Robinson looked about him, puzzled at seeing so many familiar objects which he was unable to place. "Ah!" he said suddenly, recognizing a high-backed, carved chair of Denbeigh's.

"This is an antique," said Annchen, drawing her lips together primly.

How well Robinson remembered its absurd carving, and the day that Denbeigh ordered it, along with a heavy table to match it! This last was now standing in the middle of the room, covered with glass-cases in which were the manuscripts of many of Denbeigh's works, each carefully bound in white vellum and stamped with a gilded presentation on the outside. Most of them were inscribed to Mrs. Gates, one to D'Orsey, and one also to Annchen—it had a battered look; but there was none with Mrs. Denbeigh's name.

"This is his writing-pad," said Annchen. It was a handsome one, also of white vellum, one of Robinson's own. He recognized it, having left it behind in Florence. His lip twitched, so did Annchen's. At the next moment her eyes flashed. "I

told mamma that it was yours, but she would insist upon it that it was his. I wanted it—I did miss you horribly, Robin, when you went away!"

"Never mind, I have another that I will give you, much prettier than this."

"This table," said Annchen, with a change of tone, "is one on which Mr. Denbeigh wrote all his wonderful works." Again she looked Robinson in the eyes, and they had no need to say to each other how distinctly they remembered Denbeigh writing in his lap, huddled in a rocking-chair!

"Don't show any more," said Robinson. "It isn't fair."

"All right, but you had better look at them; mamma has given them all to Coldston, and the men are coming to pack them up to-morrow."

Robinson glanced obediently at the narghile, which Denbeigh never smoked; at the foils and boxing-gloves, which he never used; and at the trophy of weapons that he had bought all together at an auction. Robinson, who was something of a connoisseur, remembered his own unsparing criticisms of these acquisitions, and Denbeigh's cynical indifference as to their quality. "They are all I need for properties," he said; and the few valuable things that he came across, accidentally, he straightway sold, saying that he was too poor a man to be able to indulge in genuine curios. Robinson had some of these now. They represented

privations, old clothes, inexpensive lodgings, few amusements, and much curtailment of tobacco in the form of cigars. Slowly Robinson went about the room. "Some of these pictures are good," he said absently.

"He didn't know enough to find it out, or they wouldn't be here."

"You must not say these things; you should think of your mother."

"As if she did not know!"

Robinson went to the porch door and stood with his back to her.

"And Aunt Paula knew, too!"

"Annchen!"

"You can see for yourself. Is there anything of his in her part of the house? They think I do not know—they try to believe they don't themselves; but——"

"Come into the other room," he said imperiously.

"But I want to speak to you, Robin. I have something to say."

"Then why not go to the library?"

"I can't, truly. We never take guests to the library without an invitation from Aunt Paula."

Robinson sat down with a despairing gesture of resignation. "Say on. But I must beg you to have the kindness to refrain from any mention whatever of your family. Apparently you don't

know when you are making embarrassing revelations and when you are not."

"Aunt Paula must have some place to herself, if only to afford a refuge from all the Nihilists, and the geniuses, and the Hindoos, and the artists, and the authors, and the lambs, and the lions, and the unicorns——"

"Never mind the rest. I approve, I heartily approve!"

"Of what is Mr. Robinson approving, Annchen?" asked Mrs. Gates, coming in with D'Orsey, who had returned with them from the Fanshawes'.

Annchen had no conscience. "Of the 'collection,' mamma," she said sweetly. "He finds it so interesting."

"Ah, yes, our dear, dear collection! So Annchen has told you that we are to lose the Heart of the Household!" Mrs. Gates sailed smoothly toward Robinson, and Annchen, falling behind, made a frightful grimace of disappointment at her mother's back. "Have you seen your own contribution?" continued Mrs. Gates, pointing to a little table near where Robinson was standing.

He looked down at several small bronzes, among which one was labelled "Modern: Loaned by F. Robinson." Taking off his glasses, Robinson picked up the heavy little figure and held it close to his eyes. "Yes, I remember," he said, putting it down, and then, with the glasses on, scrutinizing

Mrs. Gates with equal keenness, "but it is not mine, neither is it modern."

Mrs. Gates shook her head at him playfully. Annchen turned abruptly away and looked at one of the pictures on the wall; her mother's kittenish moments always had instant effect upon her nerves.

"Surely you have not forgotten our last talk about this?" Robinson said to Mrs. Gates.

"But my dear Mr. Robinson, Denbeigh, Denbeigh himself pronounced this only a skilful forgery. 'Its undeniable beauty'—as you know, I am quoting from the will—'is my only excuse for offering this statuette as a memento to so keen-sighted and infallible a judge as my friend, Frederick Robinson.' "

"It is beyond doubt a most exquisite thing!" exclaimed D'Orsey, taking it up in a way that drew an involuntary motion of protest from Robinson. "But modern, unquestionably modern!"

Robinson stooped, detached the tag, tore it in two and put back but one half. "I shall not gainsay the verdict of two such competent authorities; but I cannot think of robbing the Denbeigh Collection of its only—of such an extraordinary example of its founder's—of a specimen of forgery so unique."

"If you want to say something nasty, Robin, why not say it out?" suggested Annchen.

"But I wish to say something graceful, some-

thing that will show Mrs. Gates how sincere I am in my desire that this bronze should become a permanent part of the collection."

While they had been speaking a servant had come to the inner door and spoken to Annchen. "Mamma, Aunt Paula says that if we do not hurry, the rarebit will be spoiled. Come, Robin and Mr. D'Orsey, I am going to turn out the light."

The two men turned toward the door, evidently relieved; but Mrs. Gates lingered, motioning imperatively to Annchen that she was not to wait for her. She stood for a moment thoughtfully regarding the bronze; then she took up the portion of the card upon which "Modern" had been left, and, tearing it into little bits as she went, followed the others.

## CHAPTER XIX

NED MAXWELL appeared promptly at breakfast the next morning; he came in, talking very fast, and met Bennie's scrutinizing eyes with defiance. "Well," he said, a little embarrassed under this persistent gaze, and conscious of reddened eyelids and a slightly shaking hand, "what do you see?"

"Nothing in particular."

"I hope you had a pleasant evening, yesterday," said Ned. To his surprise Bennie shook his head at him sharply, but the warning came too late.

"Where were you two?" asked Nellie.

"Oh, we weren't together!" said Ned; "at least —not exactly."

"How can you be together 'not exactly'?" asked his father, with the amiable intention of keeping up conversation.

"Well," said Ned, "I saw Bennie at Mrs. Denbeigh's."

"Oh, were you up there?" said his mother, in pleased tones.

"No, I was just out rowing on the river."

"You cannot see the Gates's house from the river

at this time of year," said Professor Maxwell, still trying to be interested.

Bennie laughed. His father was so innocently driving Ned into a corner.

"What is the joke?" asked Nellie.

"Nothing at all," said Ned hastily. "I was out rowing with some of the fellows and we heard somebody on the island, playing in the craziest fashion——"

"Playing?" said the professor.

"The violin," said Ned; "we rowed up to see who it was, but before we got there the people left."

"Was it you, Bennie?" said Nellie. "Who were you with?"

"Oh, it wasn't Bennie!" said Ned, with a laugh; "it was Robin."

"Mr. Robinson!" said Nellie, who knew all the professors' nicknames—far better than they did themselves!

"Old Robin Redbreast himself!" answered Ned, with a chuckle. "And Mrs. Denbeigh!"

"See here, Ned," said Bennie, "you mustn't say that; you couldn't possibly have seen who was in the canoe."

"What's the use of denying it was Mrs. Denbeigh and Robinson?"

"I tell you, you couldn't have seen! She had her head turned away."

"As if I didn't know the turn of Mrs. Denbeigh's neck!"

"You weren't within twenty yards of them at any time, and at that distance, in the moonlight——"

"Not within twenty yards of them! I tell you, we'd have overhauled them in another minute if Robinson hadn't steered the boat in among the rocks. I told the fellows what a current there was on that side."

"Ned!" said his father, "you don't mean to say that you were chasing them?"

"Oh, well," said Ned, "they were fair game. I couldn't have believed that Robinson would be such an idiot as to play that way over on the island. He knows that on a night like last night the river would be full of boats."

"I tell you it wasn't Robinson," said Bennie.

"Perhaps you'd like me to believe it was you!"

"You can believe what you please, but you have no right to assert that it was Robinson and Mrs. Denbeigh. You didn't get near enough to them to see them, and even if you had, I doubt if you could have seen straight!"

"What do you mean?" said Ned furiously.

Bennie was aghast; however they might bring each other's crimes to private justice, their brotherly code had been never to betray each other. To be sure, it had worked entirely to Ned's ad-

vantage, as Bennie seldom transgressed; but now Professor Maxwell looked up, thoroughly aroused.

"What is this?" he said.

The two young men were silent, Bennie crimson, Ned pale and defiant. "There is nothing to make a fuss over," said Ned at last; "we had been having a meeting of the Society."—Mr. Maxwell stirred impatiently: the meetings of the Society were fraught with danger for Ned.—"The rooms had grown too warm, so we took the boats and went down on the river. As I told you, we heard some one playing on the island and rowed up to listen. We could see the woman's white dress, and when they heard us——"

"You called?" said his father disapprovingly.

"Oh, I don't know; they heard us, anyhow, and made a rush for their boat. I thought it was Annchen Gates and Harry, and so gave chase."

"How many of you were there?"

"Oh, eight or ten!"

"Not one of those men knows Annchen," said Bennie indignantly. "I don't see how you could lead a lot of fellows like that, Ned;—the riffraff of the college—in chase of a young girl that you have been friends with, all your——"

"It was Annchen, then!" Ned interrupted. "I bet ten dollars it was, and lost. I thought that fellow handled a paddle too well for Robin. By Jove, I'll get that ten back from Tommy Mason!"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Bennie.

"I'm glad you have so much money to waste," said his father coldly.

Ned looked down at the table in sullen defiance.

"What followed?" said Mr. Maxwell.

"Well, I thought it was Annchen and Harry, so we rowed up under the balcony of the boat-house and serenaded."

"Who serenaded? All of you?" Professor Maxwell's indignant tone struck terror to Ned's conscience. He slipped from the self-assertive young man to the angry little boy who has got himself into difficulties. "No, it wasn't all of us! It was just me; and I had only sung a few notes when Mrs. Denbeigh came forward into the moonlight, with Robinson and Bennie behind her."

"Gracious, Ned," said his sister, "it sounds exactly as if you had been drunk!" She had not meant it, but Bennie looked across the table oddly at Ned.

"You needn't look at me that way!" cried Ned. "I hadn't touched more than a glass or two, and for a person with as strong a head as mine, that's nothing, nothing!"

"That will do, Ned," said his father.

Ned sprang up from the table, pushing over his chair in his haste, and stalked from the room, slamming the door behind him.

"He hasn't had any breakfast," said his mother.

"I don't think he wanted it much," said Bennie.

But Professor Maxwell was silent. "Come in here, Bennie," he said, as they stood in the hall after they had left the table. "What is this about Ned?" He led the way into the study and sat down wearily in front of his desk.

"Father, I am not sorry to have your eyes opened—but I don't want to tell on Ned."

"You are getting too old for that, Bennie; you are no longer a boy in danger of being rated as a tattle-tale. Had Ned been drinking last night?"

"If it had been a fellow I didn't know, there might have been room for doubt," stammered Bennie; "but of course with Ned I saw the difference at once—he wasn't very bad."

"What did he sing?"

"Oh, the song! That was only some fool stuff about his 'Lady Lou.' Ned really would be all right if it were not for those idiotic fellows in his 'Society'!"

"Has this been going on long?"

"For about half of last year. He didn't join, you know, until last February; but in these two or three weeks, since college began, they have been rather going it."

"I wish I had never let him room in the college," said Professor Maxwell.

"You let me," said Bennie, "and it was all right;

and it will be all right with Roger—Ned is different."

"I have been very much troubled about him—very much troubled."

"Ned is good stuff, father."

"Sometimes I doubt if he is—good stuff."

"You mustn't!" cried Bennie eagerly. "Ned's the kind that you have to trust. If he thought you didn't trust him he'd go all to pieces. Besides, with you for his father and mamma for his mother, he can't help being good stuff!"

"I am troubled about Ned," repeated his father drearily, "much troubled!"

"Ned is the brightest of us all," said Bennie; "but he does not fit in, just now, with college life. He has a grasping kind of a mind, and this—educational triviality doesn't fill it."

"This—triviality?"

"You know what I mean! Scholarship doesn't appeal to Ned as a thing by itself; what he wants is to feel that he has some work on hand. As soon as he begins real work he will be all right. There are lots of fellows like that, father."

"I suppose I ought not to keep you any longer," said Professor Maxwell, shaking his head despondently; "but—I am troubled about—" He stopped himself, conscious of his sorrowful repetition.

Bennie left the room, and Professor Maxwell sat, tapping his paper-knife absently on his desk,

until he heard the sound of the closing front door; then he got up and turned the key in the lock, and tottered slowly back to his chair. His shoulders were bent; he seemed to have grown suddenly very old. "O Ned, Ned!" he said.

For a long time he sat there, with his head bowed upon his hands.

The children had all gone to school, and the house was quiet. He could hear Mrs. Maxwell singing to herself softly somewhere upstairs, and he raised his head to listen. Involuntarily he smiled. Her voice had a fresh youthfulness about it that reminded him of old days. Indeed, for him, the old days had never ceased to exist; for him, she had never lost her charm. He glanced about the little study which, like herself, in spite of poverty and hard usage, still held something of the exquisiteness with which she managed to invest all her household belongings. How many a humorous tilt there had been between them as to the keeping of that study! He had worked there for years—ever since he and she had first gone to housekeeping. There had been an understanding then that when he should be promoted to a professorship they were to leave the cramped quarters for something more in keeping with the dignity of their position; but they had never been able to do it! Other men had built houses, bought property; other men travelled and grew rich; but the Maxwells had stayed on in the same little place, without

change. And never once in all the years had Professor Maxwell criticised his wife's methods, or repined at fate. "It is quite as much my fault as hers," is the nearest he ever came to any adverse comment.

One fact had always been a comfort to him: his life was insured, and in case of his death Mrs. Maxwell's future and that of the younger children was, in a moderate way, secure. But of late this had been merely a tantalizing possibility. It was not death he feared, but life. He rose and, going to the end of the bookcase, unhooked a small framed picture from where it was hanging and took it to the window. His old neighbor Moncrieff looked out at him from it with steady eyes. "You had not this to face," he said softly; "your death was not a benefit to those left behind—a positive benefit!" He went back to his desk and, pulling open a little drawer, picked up a small sealed bottle. "It would be a felony," he murmured thoughtfully, "certainly a felony. But the chances are that it would not be discovered. I should leave them tolerably comfortable, at least they would not starve, and they would not have a sick man—nine chances out of ten a hopeless idiot—to care for. But—take it at the worst; suppose it were impossible to conceal? Which would hurt them the most? To look back upon me such as I may become, or to know that I have taken my life in my own hands and made way with it?

Bennie would understand—she would understand —that I had done it for their sakes. Ned?— Probably Ned would be angry! Ned has not got beyond being sensitive as to what the other fellows might say; but in time to come it would be forgotten—only to be raked up in some moment of stress!" He turned the little tube slowly round and round in his fingers. "Ah, Moncrieff, Moncrieff!" he said aloud, his eyes turning again toward the picture, "I had looked to you to show me the way in which I ought to bear my fate!"

At that moment some one knocked sharply at the door. Professor Maxwell started violently. He had a sensation of guilt; his hands shook and the picture dropped to the floor, breaking the glass, and at the same time striking the tube from his fingers. Again came the knocking, and his wife's voice sounded cheerfully. "Will, can you see Mr. Robinson? He can only stop a moment."

Feeling that delay looked suspicious, Professor Maxwell hurried to turn the key. His wife smiled at him and went back to her work. As Robinson came forward his foot crunched on the broken glass, and he stooped, mechanically, to pick up the picture, disclosing the tube beneath it.

"Thank you, don't trouble yourself," said Professor Maxwell hastily, taking them from his hand.

"I came to see you about that class in Greek history at Miss Lewis's," said Robinson; "but first let me say how sorry I am for your loss—in

Moncrieff. I never knew him well, but I liked him. His death was a terrible shock to me—what must it have been to you!" There was a shake in Robinson's voice that he could not control. The label on the phial was very plainly written, with certain other words—of warning.

"I was just looking at his picture, as you see," said Professor Maxwell, brushing the bottle into the drawer and stooping to gather up the remainder of the broken glass. "It did not seem like Moncrieff to—do that; although he always said that, under certain circumstances, he should feel justified in taking his own life."

"He has made it harder for every one of us."

"Us?"

"Well, then—me," said Robinson, with a half-laugh.

"Don't say that, Robinson! We are placed here in a position of trust—we have no right to palter with that description of temptation."

Robinson hesitated a moment before he answered. Then, with some violence he took up the cudgels in Moncrieff's behalf; sharp and keen the argument wavered back and forth between the two for the space of an hour or more; then Robinson got up to go. Not until after he had walked halfway to the city did it occur to him that he had not mentioned again the Greek history class at Miss Lewis's school

## CHAPTER XX

WHEN Robinson had started to walk into the city, that morning, he had had no intention of going to the Maxwells', but as he passed the door something had prompted him to ring the bell. He felt now that this prompting had not been without its definite object. He would have laughed at any one who had accused him of thinking thus; but there was a slight vein of superstition in Robinson, and he kept saying to himself: "It was well, indeed, that I stopped!"

The delay, however, had made him so late that he stopped for an early luncheon at Garnier's and then continued on his way. It was nearly two o'clock when he reached the wide, park-like common in the central portion of the shopping district. All sorts of itinerant venders were hawking their wares along the street outside the common fence, and he had not noticed them especially, until suddenly his attention was drawn by seeing a lady, some distance in front of him, stop near one of them and then swerve aside to the outer edge of the pavement. Robinson's quick eye, always on the lookout for every phase of human interest,

caught the little scene with surprise. He now saw that the lady was Mrs. Denbeigh, and he started forward, thinking that the man had perhaps spoken rudely. Unconsciously to himself he had been watching her, and now, as he hurried to overtake her, the cry of the pedler at last made a definite impression upon his senses.

"Have you read the 'Higher Renunciation'?" shouted the man. "Denbeigh's 'Higher Renunciation'?—Everybody's reading it, sir," he added, as Robinson turned on him an astonished face. "Denbeigh's 'Higher Renunciation,' " he shouted, "ten cents a copy. How to lead a better life without giving anything up," he added, apparently out of his own mind. "The Higher Life! Only ten cents for the Higher Life!"

Mrs. Denbeigh made a furtive motion of the hands, as if to put them over her ears, and hurried on. Robinson stood stock-still, watching her, and then resolutely turned and went the other way.

" 'Higher Renunciation,' professor?" said the pedler, offering him a copy.

"*Do I show it so plainly already?*" thought Robinson, throwing up his head and looking at the man haughtily. "What makes you call me 'professor'?" he said aloud.

"Used to see you out in the college park this summer, sir—I was one of the guides. Have you read Denbeigh's 'Higher Renunciation'?"

"No, have you?"

"Yes, I looked into it the other night; thought I might find something to holler."

"Ah! Then you were calling the results of your own observations?"

"You mean, 'how to live a better life without giving anything up'? Yes, that's just it. So far as I can make out, this here higher renunciation means that you don't renounce. It's selling like wildfire, professor. I'm surprised you haven't read it. Take one and try it."

Robinson laughed and searched in his pocket for a coin, but waved aside the book as the man handed it to him. "Thank you, I don't believe I want it. Give this copy to somebody who needs it."

"All right," said the man, with a humorous twitch of his wide, loose lips; "Henry D. Cogswell passes by here every day about this time, and this book's just the kind of thing a millionaire would like to have."

Robinson went on, although tempted to wait and see if the fellow would quite dare to make Mr. Cogswell the proposed gift. He reached the end of the common and crossed the street, his way leading by one of the theatres, into which a crowd of people were streaming. Hearing familiar voices in front of him he looked up, surprised to see Harry and Annchen together.

"Oh, come along," said Harry, "they say it's

ripping good fun! And what if people do talk a little more or less?"

The crowd pushed between, and Robinson could not hear Annchen's answer; but as she and Harry turned in at the door of the theatre, he was left in no doubt as to what her decision had been. He followed them—they were too much occupied with each other to notice him—and quietly bought the seat next them. He did not go in at once; but, as he waited a little too long in the lobby, he found the play begun and the stage dark, and met much quiet execration from those already seated, when he finally made his way to his place.

For a time Annchen and Harry did not notice him, in fact not until the end of the scene, when Harry gave vent to a surprised "Hello!"

"Why, Robin!" said Annchen, "how nice! I didn't know you ever went to the theatre—over here!"

Harry looked very glum. "I say," he whispered to Annchen, "he's done this on purpose."

"What?"

"Followed us."

"How perfectly dear and jolly of him! He knew I didn't really want to come."

"I'm sure I didn't compel you to come, and if he's going to stay here and spoil all the fun I'd rather go."

Annchen made him no answer, but for the next

two or three minutes turned her attention exclusively in Robinson's direction. "Oh, haven't you gone yet?" she remarked, when the lights were next turned out. "I was just making arrangements with Robin to see me home."

"In that case, perhaps I needn't wait. I really had an engagement at the club."

"Oh, go! Go, by all means!" And Harry, with a little murmured excuse, took his hat and went. "There," said Annchen, turning fiercely on Robinson, "see what you have done!"

"It is seldom," said Robinson serenely, "that in this life a man sees so speedily the results of a good action!"

"Oh, well, we might as well enjoy the play, now that we are here! Only I suppose you are prepared"—she looked at him wickedly—"for the consequences? Everybody in Great Dulwich will say that we are engaged."

"Let them say."

It spoke a great deal for Annchen's real fondness for Robinson that she did not refuse to enjoy the play. "You don't need to come home with me," she said, as they left the theatre.

But Robinson, who had no intention of allowing her out of his sight again, took the coach to the entrance of the Gates estate. The memory of the night before was still discomfiting, and he wanted to see Mrs. Denbeigh. The wish was gratified;

for as he and Annchen were walking up from the gate they met her coming from the boat-house. Annchen looked at her sharply, and then began to talk very fast.

"Robin and I have just been announcing our engagement," she said, seizing on the first thought that occurred to her.

Her aunt opened her mouth as if to speak, but her lip quivered and she said nothing. Suddenly, Robinson became aware of what had been apparent to Annchen from the first glance—Mrs. Denbeigh had recently been crying.

"Annchen," said Robinson sharply, "haven't we had enough of this folly for one afternoon?"

Annchen looked at him a moment, and then at her aunt. "Very well, if you must cry, Aunt Paula," she said, "I am going," and she fled toward the house, leaving them alone together.

Mrs. Denbeigh drew out her handkerchief and wiped the tears from her cheeks, her eyes following Annchen with something of amusement mingling with her misery. "I beg you not to notice," she said to Robinson; "something happened—I was not warned; it—" She had reached out her hand to him as if in greeting.

Robinson took it. "Don't try to explain. I understand—I was behind you, outside the common."

A deep flush mounted to her forehead, and

her eyes again brimmed with tears. "I am not wounded, I am not grieving, I am not crying for any of the things you would imagine—I am simply and purely enraged! Enraged!" she repeated.

"It is only a device of the publishers."

"As if that were anything to me! If I had chosen I might have sold the book that way myself."

"But you never would have chosen."

"Can't you see," she cried, "that if it were great, if it were good, if it were genuine, I shouldn't mind having it cried upon the house-tops?"

"I see; I knew from the beginning. Why explain?"

"Yes, why explain, when there is no explanation to be made that does not say too much or too little. It is the need of explanation, however, that enrages! I have never had to explain anything I chose to do."

"Must you explain now? Need you ever explain—to me?"

Robinson was still holding her hand. She looked up at him in surprise, and then, in answer to his look more than to his words: "No, I need never explain to you," she said; "you have understood from the beginning."

"And may I keep on—understanding?"

She drew her hand away. Robinson took it

again, gently, and she let it stay, but withdrew in her speech the meaning he might read into her consent. "If I were sure that it was only comprehension, pure and simple, I could not refuse—I could not turn aside the—the—sense of reassurance that your understanding brings me."

Robinson threw back his head. "To have you accept that much is enough." The words were modest, but the gesture was full of triumph.

"No, it is not enough."

"Then why not take more? It is there."

"It is not what I take; it is what I give that is deficient."

"Can you, then, never give more?"

"Don't ask. Don't put things to the test; be satisfied with what you have."

"With what I have? What is that? How much?"

She pulled her hand from him and turned away. "Oh, it is nothing, nothing, nothing, compared with what you give! I have no exchange to offer, unless that I cannot deny myself the peace of receiving may be called an exchange."

Robinson came a step nearer and stood behind her, looking down at the soft tendrils of hair that grew about her neck. "I shall not ask for more —now," he said; "but if the day comes when what I have to offer, in its full meaning, seems to you worth the taking——"

"Would it be anything to you if I said that I should wish that the day might come?"

"It is more than I had asked for, more than I dared hope."

"Don't; I forbid you to hope!"

They were standing at the edge of the lawn; the leaves of the maples had fallen in red and yellow drifts, like gay rugs thrown upon the grass. Miller was burning brush farther over, out of sight. A billow of blue smoke rolled across the broad, smooth turf between them and the house. It had never once occurred to Robinson that these were all her possessions—the house, the beautiful old trees, and the wide-stretching estate. "Must I say good-by?" he said.

She still stood with her back to him. "There is nothing but that left to say."

"If I go," said Robinson, "shall you cry—again?"

Mrs. Denbeigh wheeled and looked up at him.

"No, if you go I shall not cry at all!"

Robinson laughed and turned away.

Mrs. Denbeigh watched him until he had passed out of sight behind the shrubbery at the gate. "He always understands!" she said.

## CHAPTER XXI

TWO days later the afternoon found Annchen and Harry again upon the river. The bright colors of the trees were reflected, soft and rich, in the still waters along the bank; the canoe slipped through them noiselessly, as if suspended in mid-air; but the autumnal peace was absent from the hearts of the two young people who occupied it.

"He did it on purpose!" exclaimed Harry, in continuance of their hot debate.

"What if he did? We had no business to go there alone together; he was only trying to prevent our being talked about."

"Where is the harm of going to the theatre on Wednesday afternoon?"

"It isn't done in our class of people, and Robin knows it."

"There were plenty of men and girls there—nice girls, too."

"They may be nice—but they are not us. Why pretend?"

"You said yesterday that you didn't care; and if you don't, why should Robin concern himself?"

"Because he is—Robin. You know very well

that he hates to meddle with other people's affairs, but he thinks that we have made ourselves sufficiently conspicuous. I am beginning to agree with him—that kind of thing has ceased to be amusing."

"It has," answered Harry haughtily, "when every meddling old fool feels that he is at liberty to interfere."

"May I inquire of whom you are speaking?"

"I am speaking of Robinson."

"Apologize at once!"

"To whom?"

"To me."

Harry laughed and paddled carelessly around a rock near the shore of the island, almost running down Tom Bent and his sister Sylvia, who were coming the other way.

"Cousin Paula wants us all to stop there to tea—I do wish that you would be more careful!" Sylvia called to him; but Harry had turned the canoe in the direction of Mrs. Denbeigh's boat-house on the other shore and did not appear to hear.

"They are busy quarrelling, as usual," said Sylvia.

"It is high time that they should do it, once for all, and then let each other alone."

"Can't you speak to Harry, Tom?"

"You haven't, as yet, given me any right to do that; but even if you had, Harry is not a baby. He knows what he is about as well as we do."

"I am not sure that he does."

"In that case interference is a dangerous remedy. Nobody wants to open Harry's eyes to something that—perhaps doesn't exist."

"Then you think that Annchen——?"

"Neither you nor I have any business to think anything at all about it— Hello! What is that?"

It was a frantic shout from the other side. Fortunately Bent was paddling, but with all his exertions, it seemed an age to Sylvia before they reached Harry, who was swimming near his overturned canoe, while Annchen was nowhere to be seen. "I can't get her!" he said, and dived again.

"Take the paddle, Sylvia," said Tom Bent, "and be careful! I don't want to have us all in the water." He handed her the paddle, took off his coat and shoes, and, creeping slowly backward, let himself gently into the water.

"Oh, hurry!" said Sylvia, but he was gone. She held her breath. After a long waiting, Harry came to the surface and clung to the floating canoe. Again the moments dragged on.

"Isn't he staying under a frightful time?" she said, at last, to Harry, who nodded, too much exhausted to speak.

"Can anything have happened?"

Harry shook his head.

Sylvia, who had been sitting on the bottom of her canoe, began dragging herself cautiously up

toward the seat. Harry's brow contracted, but he did not speak; he had great confidence in Sylvia's ability to carry out any plan she chose to adopt. When she had, at last, reached Bent's place, she took the paddle and brought the canoe to Harry's side. "Don't you want to catch on here?" she said.

"No, I am all right now, but you had better go in, nearer to the boat-house."

She began paddling toward the shore. "Do you see them anywhere?" she called.

"No."

"If he would only come up! If he would only come up!" she groaned.

A faint laugh came to them.

"What is that?" cried Harry.

Sylvia stopped paddling and turned her head. "It is Annchen! Tom is behind her; they are making straight for the float."

"Idiot! She has been swimming under water; in her clothes, too! It is lucky that we were so near shore. Paddle, Sylvia, can't you?"

"I am doing my best," panted Sylvia. "I am afraid that the tide is beginning to turn."

"She will be caught in the current! Shout, Sylvia! Yell! Tell her to go behind the rocks and make for the other float. Keep a little up stream," directed Harry, and as a shrill scream came to them, in Annchen's voice, he struck out for the

shore. "Don't lose your head! Come as near as you can, Sylvia, we are going to need you," he called over his shoulder.

How many times they had played in that river at rescuing each other from drowning! The reality, Sylvia thought, was much less thrilling than the sport. There was a confused moment when she did not know what was happening; Annchen was lost to sight, Bent was swimming with the current, Harry dived. Then Bent struggled toward her, dragging Annchen after him by the collar of her loose flannel waist.

"Paddle for the slack water behind the rocks," he said, putting his hand on the stern of the canoe. "I will keep her head up."

"I can keep my own head up! Let go of my collar!" Annchen made a feeble effort to wriggle over in the water.

Bent shook her as if she had been a little dog. "Be still!" he commanded. "Now, Sylvia."

Sylvia paddled against the sucking, drawing grip of the current until it seemed as if her heart would burst.

"Good!" said Bent softly.

She glanced at him in surprise. "I haven't made an inch," she whispered—there was not breath enough for audible speech—but as she spoke the hold of the current loosened and they moved steadily into the still water behind the rocks.

"Harry has reached the lower float—some one is helping him out," said Bent. "It is Robinson."

"I had forgotten all about Harry!" Sylvia's tones were thrilled by horrified self-reproach. "He might have drowned."

"I saw that he was all right. The chief consideration, now, is to get Annchen home as soon as possible."

"Annchen can—get—herself—home!" puffed that young lady ungratefully.

"You couldn't swim three strokes if I should let you go."

"Try it!" But, as she felt his hold loosening a little: "No, don't!" she begged.

The upper float was full of people ready to help, as several of Mrs. Denbeigh's friends had been taking tea with her in the boat-house. Miller's wagon, fortunately, was at hand, and Annchen was hurried off to the house, while Sylvia and Bent were surrounded by a crowd of curious and interested questioners.

"It was the merest chance that I got her," said Bent. "I had given up finding her, and thought that she had been swept farther in, where Harry was; but I felt something, grabbed for it, and behold Annchen!" He swayed a little on his feet as he spoke, and Sylvia saw that he was pale.

"You are not hurt?" she asked anxiously.

"No, but I struck something when I first hit

the current over there; it caught me, too, and I had a nasty twist before I could get loose." He turned to climb the steps, but stopped a moment at the bottom, as if to gather strength to ascend. "Just give me an arm here, Carter," he said to a young doctor who had been with the others when they had first landed.

"I thought you had gone up with Annchen, Dr. Carter," said Mrs. Denbeigh.

"Annchen dismissed me with contumely. Her mother is with her. I don't think that she needs anything more than warmth and dry clothes." He came down the steps and offered Tom his arm.

"You had better go to the house, Tom," said Mrs. Denbeigh.

"You are very kind, Paula," said Bent unsteadily; "I could not think of inconveniencing—" He winced with a little groan as the young doctor put his arm around him.

"I wonder if you haven't broken a rib?"

"I struck on my side."

"It may not be anything serious," said Carter, "but then again it may. If you are not putting Mrs. Denbeigh to inconvenience, I should advise you to stay here for at least a few hours."

"Why can't you take me along with you?" protested Bent. "You have a closed carriage and plenty of robes."

"How foolish!" said Mrs. Denbeigh. "You

can hardly get up the steps now." She crowded in between him and the railing, and taking his other arm threw all her strength into helping him.

In spite of himself Bent leaned upon her.

"Don't you see that you have no choice?" she said.

He looked down at her with an odd, rueful smile. "No?" he said. "Perhaps not, but there is no necessity for your getting yourself wet. Come, Carter, help me across to the house."

Sylvia looked after them thoughtfully, then shook herself together, and as she did so she saw that Robinson was absently staring after Mrs. Denbeigh, who had turned to bid her guests good-by. There was something in his expression similar to her own that irritated her, and she hurried into the boat-house, where Harry—miserable and dripping—sat by a rousing fire, waiting for some word to be brought him of Annchen's condition.

"Why don't you go home with Henry Carter?" said Sylvia impatiently. "Tom is going to stay here at Paula's for a little while, and the sooner you get dry clothes the better."

"Paula sent the maid to telephone for dry clothes as soon as she saw us in the water."

"I think that was extremely unfeeling of Paula! How could she know that we should not all of us be drowned?"

"We've been upset before."

"But we never were caught in the current. Tom Bent said himself that his getting Annchen was the merest accident; he just happened to get there in time."

"It is a way he has," interjected Harry.

"I never saw anything so mismanaged? Nobody showed any coolness or presence of mind. We all blundered along and did the first thing we thought of."

"Wretched form, the whole thing!"

Sylvia, glancing at him sharply, detected a covert smile on his face as he cowered nearer to the fire and pretended to be watching the steam rising from his dripping clothes. "I do wish you would get those wet things off!" she cried impatiently. "There are lots of bathing suits down in the dressing-room. Put one on and wrap up in that rug there on the lounge. Then you needn't wait; you can go home with Henry Carter."

"Henry Carter will not be ready any sooner than I am," said Harry. "And I am not going home. I mean to stay around here until I see Annchen again."

"She will not be allowed to get up. If you want to apologize for anything, I will tell her you are sorry. I suppose that you were quarrelling, as usual? What was it about?"

"Robinson. I said something about him and she declared that unless I apologized she wouldn't stay

with me another minute. I asked how she was to help herself, and I pretended to turn the canoe toward the island again, and the next instant we were both in the water——"

"She tipped you over?"

"Did I say that? Why will you jump at conclusions?"

"Shall I tell her you take it back about Robinson?"

"You shall not! I want to have a serious talk with Annchen. We've got to stop this fooling around together. She said this afternoon that it had ceased to be amusing—I agree with her; it has."

"You seem to be the last to find it out, you two," said Sylvia cruelly.

Harry ignored the shot. "If I can't see Annchen, I shall have to speak to Mrs. Gates."

"What for?"

"Well, if you must know, I am going to ask her permission to marry Annchen. The engagement ought to be announced at once, to put an end to all this miserable gossip."

"Is Annchen willing?"

In spite of his anxiety, his wet clothes, and his unhappiness, Harry could not suppress a grin.

"Oh," said Sylvia furiously, jumping to her feet, "if ever I dreamed that anybody could be as sure of me as that, I should kill him!"

"Well, at least, I am not so sure of Annchen that I should be willing to have my proposal of marriage 'laid on the table' for the next six months," rejoined Harry.

Sylvia had no opportunity for retaliation, as a maid from the house came with word that Harry's dry clothes were waiting for him there. He hurried away, and so soon as he had made a change he asked for Mrs. Gates. Without increasing the difficulties of his position by undue hesitation, he at once made known his wishes. "If you are willing, Mrs. Gates," he said, "I should like to ask Annchen to marry me."

Mrs. Gates was startled, but not by any means displeased. "You are very young," she said. "You are both of you young. Does Annchen know anything of this? Have you spoken to her?"

"Not yet; but I am going to speak to her the first chance I get."

"You mean, of course, with my permission," said Mrs. Gates archly.

"Will you tell her that I should have asked her first, if you had let her get up again this afternoon? I thought it was better that I should speak to—somebody at once."

"It was very thoughtful of you, Harry dear."

"You know very well, Mrs. Gates, that this will be the best way to put a stop to all this talk; besides—it will sober us both."

"What will sober us both? Both—who?" The voice came from the door.

Mrs. Gates and Harry were sitting in the drawing-room, and Harry, who was chilly after his long wetting, was bending over the fire, with his back to the door by which Annchen had just entered.

"Oh, look here," he said, jumping up and pushing an easy-chair to the fire, "they said you weren't to come downstairs!"

Annchen sat down. "What would sober us?" she repeated judicially, "and who are we?"

Harry looked at her curiously. She was dressed in a white silk tea-gown of her aunt's, that hung in loose folds about her slight, childish figure. The elaborate laces and ribbons on it, with her paleness and the deep hollows under her eyes, made her seem older. The boy's heart beat a little; a faint doubt assailed him as to what answer Annchen might make to his proposition.

"My darling little Annchen," said Mrs. Gates solemnly, "Harry has taken me very greatly by surprise."

"He must have been saying something particularly polite."

"Well, I am sure I hope you will think it is," said Harry. "I—I asked her if she'd let you marry me."

"You did? How extremely kind! And what did she say?"

"You are far too young, either of you, to think of anything like this at present," said Mrs. Gates indulgently. "I do not deny that at some future time——"

"I beg pardon?" said Annchen as her mother paused.

"I have always been fond of this dear harum-scarum!" said Mrs. Gates, looking affectionately in Harry's direction.

Annchen was silent; yet Harry received an impression that she had listened to this statement with inward jeers.

"You see, Annchen," he began in argumentative tones, "we have been making fools of ourselves long enough."

"Quite. Why suggest continuing?"

"I don't. The best way to put an end——"

"Is, of course, to stop making fools of ourselves."

Harry made a step nearer to her chair. To his own surprise, his heart was beating riotously. "And you will?"

"I certainly will," said Annchen, looking at him from under her frowning brows.

Harry's hand was on the back of Annchen's chair, and as she was still looking up at him, he stooped as if to kiss her.

Annchen jumped to her feet and confronted him wrathfully. "Is that the way you stop making a

fool of yourself?" she cried. "What did you suppose I meant?"

"I supposed you meant that you were willing to marry me."

"No such thing! I am not going to marry anybody who makes up his mind to ask me in the course of half an hour or so, and least of all you, who do not know any better than to abuse my dearest friends to my face; as for stopping people's mouths—I always told you that I didn't mind how they talked, so there is not the least necessity that you should sacrifice yourself!"

"I am not sacrificing myself!"

"If I marry anybody, I shall marry Robin!"

"From what I have seen lately," cried Harry, "it strikes me that Robinson himself might have a word or two to say about that. I suppose you've informed him of your—intentions?"

"I spoke to him about it yesterday afternoon," said Annchen with dignity.

"Annchen, this is too absurd!" said Mrs. Gates.

"That is what I am trying to tell Harry. When I marry, I am going to marry a grown man."

Harry, very white, made Annchen a low bow and left the room.

## CHAPTER XXII

AFTER Harry had left the room Mrs. Gates took up an instructive periodical from a small table at her elbow and made a pretence of reading. "I suppose you have not looked into this article on 'Some Recent Problems of Early Democracies'?" she asked with courteous formality.

As it happened to be the most annoying thing that she could think of doing, Annchen made no answer.

"I beg pardon? I do not think I heard what you said," observed her mother after prolonged waiting.

"It would have been singular if you had—I didn't say anything."

Mrs. Gates returned to her reading, while Annchen chewed the cud of offence. "You know quite well, mamma, that I never read those paper-backed school-books," she broke out after a while. "No one ever writes for them, anyhow, except the people that can't get paid for their work in the real magazines."

"It is to be deplored," said her mother, "that

you do not take pains to be better informed. Now, this article on 'Some Recent Problems'——"

"I will not hear it. My own recent problems are more than I can take care of as it is!"

Mrs. Gates smiled. "If you regret your decision in regard to Harry—" she began.

"I don't regret it," snapped Annchen.

Mrs. Gates turned back to her reading, but she did not see the page in front of her. She was angry and disappointed; Annchen's usual effect upon her was to throw her into a state of smothered irritation. "There is one thing," she began abruptly, "that I must speak to you about seriously. It would be most annoying to Mr. Robinson to have it spread about that you were engaged to him; and if he found it necessary to deny the report publicly, it might be slightly mortifying to yourself."

"I took very good care to explain to Harry that it was an idea of my own—not Robin's at all."

"Do you wish to force Mr. Robinson into asking you to marry him?"

"I shouldn't think of waiting for that. If I want Robin to marry me, I shall ask him myself."

"And how about your Aunt Paula?"

"Was—was that what Harry meant?"

Mrs. Gates smiled significantly and picked up her magazine.

In Annchen's breast had always dwelt a small

demon of jealousy and hot temper which no one was better able to evoke than her mother. Annchen struggled against it, and almost subdued it; but so long as she remained in the room with Mrs. Gates she knew that her anger would be unconconquerable. Robinson from the beginning had been her particular, individual possession; at that moment she could not brook a divided allegiance. She still felt cold and sick, but after waiting a moment she sprang from her chair, and, with all her Aunt Paula's ribbons and laces fluttering about her, she ran across the hall and into the library on the other side of the house. It was low and dark, with a panelled ceiling above heavy beams of wood. At this season of the year the house was heated by large wood fires. Annchen stopped in the doorway. Robinson stood leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece and looking down at some one who was hidden from view in a deep, high-backed arm-chair. "I thought you had gone," she said.

Robinson started forward. "My dear child, ought you to come downstairs?"

"O Robin, I have just refused Harry!" cried Annchen hysterically; "and he and mamma both say that you are—" Annchen stopped suddenly, seeing the train of her aunt's black dress lying on the floor beyond her chair. "Aunt Paula!" she exclaimed suspiciously. "What are you doing here?"

"Talking to Mr. Robinson; come in and sit by the fire."

There was a low couch on the other side of the chimney-place; Robinson placed some more pillows upon it and waited until Annchen had made up her mind to lie down, when he covered her with a rug. She let him do all this without protest, her eyes glancing questioningly from one of them to the other.

Mrs. Denbeigh watched Robinson's ministrations; he was so skilful that there was no need for her to move. She liked to see the deftness and gentleness with which he made Annchen comfortable. "What have you been refusing Harry?" she asked.

"I have been refusing to marry Harry!"

"Ah!" said Robinson. "So that was the reason you tumbled into the water."

Mrs. Denbeigh started forward. "You didn't, Annchen! It was an accident, wasn't it?"

"How could I stay in the boat with Harry? He was saying things about—my dearest friends."

"Better let your dearest friends defend themselves," said Robinson indifferently.

"I will not have them called meddlesome old fools."

"Perhaps they did meddle and are fools, and also old."

"You were perfectly right to interfere when you

saw us going to the theatre alone together, day before yesterday, Robin!"

Mrs. Denbeigh laughed. "So that is where you were!"

"Didn't Robin tell you? I thought surely he would. I ran away in order to give him a chance, for that—and other things."

"And I," said Robinson a little stiffly, "left it to you, Annchen, to explain to your aunt."

"If you didn't tell," said Annchen, what did you talk about, after I went away?"

Robinson looked at Mrs. Denbeigh a moment, and both of them smiled. "I really can't recall just what we talked about," said Mrs. Denbeigh.

"I told Harry"—Annchen glanced wickedly from one of them to the other—"that I had thoughts of marrying Robin myself."

"Ah, thanks!" said Robinson calmly. "You do me great honor!"

"And—how did Harry take it?" asked Mrs. Denbeigh.

"He—he said he thought Robin might have a word or two to say to that; from what he——"

"Go on," said Robinson.

"From what he had seen lately."

"Harry is mistaken," said Robinson serenely. "I—haven't a word to say to it."

"What if I were in earnest?" said Annchen, frowning.

"In that case, I should like time to consider it," said Robinson.

The fact that he was able to jest about it gave Annchen a moment's uneasiness. "Do you mean to say," she demanded, raising herself upon her elbow, "that you wouldn't marry me at once if I wanted you to?"

"Nothing of the kind; I am merely overcome—by the prospect."

Annchen fell back on the pillows with a little laugh. After all, this was an amusing game, and her jealousy disappeared before the smiling, affectionate, indulgent atmosphere with which the two grown people were surrounding her. At Annchen's age it is difficult to distinguish an instinctive longing to be the centre of interest from an unrequited affection.

Robinson drew up a low chair and sat down near her; she reached out one hand and patted him gently on the shoulder. He looked back at her and smiled, but gave no hand in return. Mrs. Denbeigh, seeing this, liked him the better for it. She had told the truth when she had said she could not recall just what he had said to her two days before; but the results of that conversation remained with her, most vividly present. She had allowed Robinson to see that she trusted him and was drawn toward him—that she was not unwilling to let this trust and affection develop into

something closer; that she even hoped for that. He would not misunderstand her; he knew that she did not love him; but her heart misgave her when she saw the difference between the Robinson of to-day and the Robinson of Wednesday afternoon. He had come back to her another man—brilliant, rich in hopes, successful; master of himself and of the world, without hesitations, without shynesses or self-depreciation. Mrs. Denbeigh wondered if this confident, happy, dominant Robinson was in reality the man whom she had very nearly persuaded herself to love. She could not determine whether the change made a final decision more, or less, difficult.

"What makes you so different to-day, Robin?" Annchen demanded after watching him for a while through her half-closed eyelashes. "You are really quite splendid."

Mrs. Denbeigh bent forward slightly.

"You see it, Aunt Paula?"

"Do you, Mrs. Denbeigh?" said Robinson.

Mrs. Denbeigh leaned back again in her chair. "Is it new clothes?" she inquired languidly.

"It is not," said Robinson.

"Then what is it?" said Annchen. "For you are not the same. More like—well—more like Tom Bent, for example. You know that worldly air, Aunt Paula—I think I like you better this way, too, Robin."

Robinson turned again to Mrs. Denbeigh, as if demanding her opinion, but she only took up the fan that was lying in her lap and spread it between her face and the light. Silence fell upon the three again, unbroken until, a few minutes later, the soft curtain at the door was pushed aside and, with a rustle of silks, Miss Langdon came into the room, bringing with her an atmosphere of cool outer air.

"I was late for the boat-house tea, Paula," she said; "but when I heard of the accident I came on to the house to see how Annchen was. I had no idea that you could be downstairs, dear. And how do you do, Mr. Robinson?"

Robinson gave her his chair and moved to a seat in the shadows, behind Annchen's lounge.

"You must have a cup of tea here," said Mrs. Denbeigh hospitably. "Light the lamps"—she turned to the servant—"and bring tea."

Miss Langdon sat with them, drank her tea, and laughed and talked pleasantly in the softly lighted room, all the time with a distinct sense of having spoiled something.

Annchen pretended that she was asleep; but when Miss Langdon left, a quarter of an hour later—taking Robinson with her—the girl observed to her aunt that "Robin went out like a snuffed candle from the minute Cousin Sylvia appeared."

"Do you think he would like to have you speak

of him in that way?" said Mrs. Denbeigh a little haughtily.

Annchen sat up and listened until the last sound of the hoofs of the Bishop's fat horses had died in the distance of the drive. "You never know when she may not change her mind and turn back," she said, "and I don't want to be caught talking about her."

"The best way to achieve that is not to do it, then."

"But I have got to. She tries to make it appear as if Robin belonged to her! But he doesn't care for her—he doesn't care for her in the least! He didn't even want to go away with her."

"Why should he not want to go away with her? She is a delightful person and an old friend of his; their friendship dates back to the time when he was a boy in college."

"Who told you so?"

"No one."

"Then how do you know?"

Mrs. Denbeigh hesitated.

"You needn't tell me how you know it," broke in Annchen; "I saw it myself in 'The Higher Renunciation,' chapter three, page seventy-eight."

Mrs. Denbeigh rose and stood looking down into the fire. "What has 'The Higher Renunciation' to do with Mr. Robinson?"

"It is the place where he speaks of the man who

has given up his first love because he hadn't the strength to renounce his ambitions. You must remember it."

"I have not read 'The Higher Renunciation.' "

"Aunt Paula! You darling!" Annchen sprang from the lounge and flung her arms around her aunt's waist and made an attempt to lift her from the floor.

"You must not do that," said Mrs. Denbeigh, struggling.

"And you never have read a single word of it? You never mean to read it?"

"Don't!"

"I knew it—I have always known it."

"Annchen, you hurt."

"After this I shall never say another word; but just now I am so happy that I can't keep still." She sat down on the couch again, resting her chin in her hand and looking thoughtfully into the fire. "If you haven't read 'The Supernal Grab,' and if —that man never talked to you of it, then how did you learn about it— I am not asking questions, I am only thinking aloud— I have it! You got it from those horrid, untruthful journals!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is true."

"How do you come to have seen them?"

"Didn't he read them aloud to mamma and me every evening—before you came?"

"But you were only a child."

"I wasn't such a child as not to be able to understand—especially when he and mamma were continually trying to put me off the scent. He never could let Robin alone; he was fond of him, and yet always nasty and treacherous. It was pathetic and —sordid. It made one want to cover up one's head. I had the same feeling about a hole in a darky's coat once last winter when we were South. You saw—too much. It made you realize that they were that color through and through."

"Annchen, Annchen! They couldn't help it!"

"N—no; not the darkies, at least. It's their fault, though, if they don't mend the holes! But, speaking of mend, here comes Tom Bent and his broken rib."

Mrs. Denbeigh turned to meet Bent, who was dressed for dinner, as she had persuaded him to stay there until the following morning. His arm was in a sling.

"Why, I heard Harry Carter tell mamma that your arm would have to be bandaged tight to your side!" said Annchen.

"I didn't care to go about for the next three or four days like a trussed fowl," said Bent. "I can hold my own arm quiet if I wish— I thought I saw the Langdon horses?"

"You did," said Annchen, "but Cousin Sylvia has gone—and she carried off Robin with her."

Bent looked disappointed. He had hoped that Robinson would stay. He did not acknowledge to himself that he would prefer to avoid being alone with Mrs. Denbeigh, and yet, throughout dinner—which was announced before long—and during the early part of the evening, he so contrived to interest Annchen and her mother that, in spite of Mrs. Gates's protests that Annchen ought to be in bed, the three sat together talking, by the library fire, until even Annchen herself acknowledged to sufficient fatigue to make it necessary for her to go upstairs. Mrs. Gates followed, and Mrs. Denbeigh and Bent were left together.

"So the old affair of Robinson and Sylvia, senior, is on again!" he said thoughtfully. "They ought to have been happy years ago. Think of all that they have missed!"

"I never heard that they were engaged."

"I don't suppose there was anything decided. They never had quite the courage for that; at least—Sylvia hadn't, and—Robinson was too proud."

"She never cared."

"Very likely not. I was only a boy then. I can't say that I knew much about it."

"I am quite sure that there was nothing in it!"

"How do you come to be so certain?"

"For one thing, it isn't like her to have let herself go to that extent; she is a judge of men; she

must have known that, after a certain fashion, he would never make a figure in the world."

"Yes, she probably saw that distinctly."

"And—while he may have idealized her once—" Mrs. Denbeigh hesitated. "There is no use of beating about the bush, Tom. You and I know Sylvia pretty well, and with all her charm she doesn't quite take us in. Mr. Robinson sees her even more clearly than we do."

"Has he ever spoken of her?"

"Never! But he has a little air of ruefulness when she is mentioned, and he is so punctiliously careful to do everything she wants that it almost amounts to an apology."

"You have some other reason, Paula, than what you call Robinson's 'air of ruefulness.' Is he engaged to some one else?"

"No, not yet—but if he were to ask——"

"Whom?"

She picked up the tongs and moved a stick of wood in the fireplace. "Mr. Robinson has a great many of the qualities that go toward making a woman happy."

"Paula!"

"I could become very fond of him—in time—I even thought, this afternoon, that I was fond of him already."

Bent stifled another exclamation of impatience.

"I trust him; and he understands me with a con-

siderate, lovely sort of chivalry. He rests me, and I am tired—tired to death! Sore and sensitive in every fibre!"

"Of course he is in love with you," said Bent coldly.

"I cannot say."

"No need to say. If you have been thinking of him, as you plainly have, and—trusting him; you have given him enough encouragement to turn his head completely."

"But I don't want him in love with me! It would spoil everything!"

"And, after all, you do not know him! Unless he loves you, Robinson will never ask you to marry him."

"But not ten minutes ago you intimated that he loved Sylvia Langdon."

"Poor Sylvia Langdon! Why could you not leave her her dream?"

"He doesn't care for her—and—I am fond of him——"

"Paula, you seem bent on marrying for something else than love. Did you make such a success of it before that you want to try it again?"

She drew a long breath and sat up very straight and rigid.

"So long as you have allowed this subject to come up you must listen to what I have to say," he went on. "I can't let you court this risk a

second time without warning you. Doubly so in this case, as you are doing a cruel thing to Robinson—who is a gentleman."

"That is the reason. I could make a gentleman happy."

"You are merely using him as a convenient wedge with which to drive out another memory. If you think that is going to make Robinson happy —I can only repeat what I said before, you do not know him! Moreover, a memory so intolerable that to escape it you are willing to take a measure as desperate as this, ought to have taught you something. All through life, Paula, you have deliberately thrust aside love."

She bent toward him, as if to remonstrate, and then decided to remain silent.

He drew a deep breath. "This is past history," he said, "or I shouldn't be speaking of it. I do not for one instant wish you to believe that I think you made a mistake when you threw me over; but when you undertook to experiment with 'The Higher Renunciation'——"

"No! You must not speak of that!" she whispered.

Bent went on, not heeding her protest. "If it had not been for Denbeigh's death you would have ruined your whole life—you came very near ruining mine. Now you want to try it again with a good man."

"That makes all the difference! I want happiness."

"You will never get it in this way!" He stood up, as if about to say good-night. "You threw away happiness for both of us when you married Denbeigh. I had hoped to find mine again——"

"In little Sylvia—I know; that made me feel free to speak to you of my own plans."

"There is nothing definite between Sylvia and me—" Bent's eyes were fixed on the floor. "I asked her to marry me in the spring. She wished it to be 'laid upon the table.' She may decide adversely; in that case"—there was a short silence, then he straightened up and looked at her, gravely smiling—"in that case, I should be a very unhappy and disappointed man." He held out his hand to her.

"Good-night," she said; "she will decide for you, and then you will be a very happy and satisfied man."

"Paula!" he began. "Paula——"

She looked up at him. The perspiration was standing in beads on his forehead. He took a step toward her, and again held out his hand. "Good-night," he said.

"Good-night, Tom. Shall I send one of the men to help you?"

"No, they sent my own man up with my things; he knows how to manage excellently."

Mrs. Denbeigh watched him as he crossed the room. She had always liked his light, quick tread. She could see that he almost ran up the stairs; and as he went by the door of the library, from the higher level of the landing, he looked down at her with a friendly nod of pure good-fellowship.

She turned inquiringly to the fire as if she asked it a question, and then, answering herself: "No," she said. "He has forgotten. I have forgotten!"

She sat back in her chair in gloomy reverie. The day, in spite of the accident on the river, had been successful until the advent of Sylvia Langdon; then the atmosphere had changed, and not for herself alone—Robinson had felt it as well as she. Her lip quivered; she looked up at the ceiling to prevent the tears running down her cheeks. "It is because I am tired," she murmured; "nothing but that!"

## CHAPTER XXIII

ALL through the drive home Miss Langdon talked. Whenever before the eye of her mind there arose the picture of a quiet room, three people sitting in the firelight, and the face of a man, from which the high tide of happiness ebbed swiftly as she came forward, she dragged her thoughts away with a sharp, quick jerk and resumed her even stream of conversation. She felt like a traveller who, having lost his way, had come back to his original starting-place with all the road again before him. There was the old, importunate need of concealment and the same desperate feeling that the attempt was useless; Robinson must know, as he rode there beside her, what she was suffering —and why.

But Robinson was too much occupied with his own thoughts to think of Miss Langdon. Her coming into the room at Mrs. Denbeigh's had recalled him rudely to a broken allegiance.

In regard to Mrs. Denbeigh, he was quite without vanity. He had not misunderstood her—in fact, he had given her credit for less personal regard for him than she really had; but his feeling for her could not be denied—it had become im-

perative. In contrast, his affection for Miss Langdon seemed to have been almost supine; it hurt him to think it.

"Have you seen Professor Maxwell lately?"

Robinson's eyes had wandered to the twilight red that burned like a coal behind some pine-trees low down in the west. She waited a moment and then repeated her question. "I beg your pardon," said Robinson, "have you asked me that before?"

"It doesn't make the least difference. I merely wanted to know how affairs were going on there."

"So far as I can see, better than might have been expected, although Maxwell looks pale and tired."

"I suppose he is worried. Like all improvident people, the rainy day comes on them as a surprise —I wonder if I dare tell you something?"

"You dare if you ought," said Robinson gently.

"You know who Dr. Saltus is?"

"Ah! Are you quite sure that you wish to tell me?"

"But this is nothing that will not be very generally known before long. Dr. Saltus, who is fond of Professor Maxwell, came to papa the other day to see if some arrangement couldn't be made to give him leave of absence. He is really unfit to continue work at present."

"There is no sign of that in his teaching," said Robinson warmly.

"I really know nothing of that. Of course it

stands to reason that a man thoroughly worn out is less inspiring than a man who is fresh."

"The source of Maxwell's inspiration will burn high even beyond the gates of death!"

"Still," said Miss Langdon, "if there is no hope —and I am sure Dr. Saltus felt that—the sooner they adjust themselves to new conditions——"

"I can't talk about it!" said Robinson.

"Something must be done for them," she persisted, feeling that she must retrieve herself. "Of course Mr. Bent is interested in them, and there are other friends—Tom, for example, and my brother-in-law. With all those children it would be impossible for them to get along without help, and I had thought that some subscription, arranged quietly—" She glanced at him, as if expecting an answer.

But Robinson sat staring at the horses' heads until they turned into the driveway of the college park. "Will you set me down here?" he said. "I have a little errand at the library."

She called to the coachman, and Robinson got out. He held her hand a minute, as he stood there, looking up into her face with vague contrition. "I know you want to help," he faltered; "I feel that I am a little oversensitive, perhaps, in my way of looking at things. You must let me come and talk it over with you—some time when my nerves are in better tune."

She longed for something spontaneous, warm, sympathetic to say—something that would well out directly from her heart and show how real her solicitude for and interest in the Maxwells was, but nothing rose to her lips, and she drew away her hand in silence. "Drive on, Connor," she said to the coachman.

Robinson stood in the pathway, his hat off, and watched the carriage until it turned into the Deanery grounds and was hidden from sight. "A subscription!" he muttered, and then hurried down the path that led to the library, only to find the door locked. Thinking that he might be admitted from the back of the building, he walked around on the grass in that direction.

It was an old building, much loved and venerated in college tradition; but some recent mistaken ideas of improvement had induced the Bishop to have a small belfry built on top of it, in which a jangling bell was rung for the changes of recitation, instead of the larger bell on the chapel, which from time immemorial had called the students of Great Dulwich to lectures. It was one of those small college matters which raise a very storm of opposition in the breast of youth, and as Robinson turned the corner he came upon a group of boys who were looking up at the roof of the library.

"If you sawed through the four corners," said a

voice from their midst, "you could topple the whole senseless thing over with a crow-bar."

Robinson came forward quickly, and, on seeing him, the group of young men sauntered away, as if they had merely stopped a moment in passing. After knocking in vain at the back door of the library he went to the commons for dinner, and then returned to his rooms.

He had many things to think of that night, but he held himself down fiercely to his work until he had made his preparations for the next morning. This done, he took his pipe and mounted to the upper part of the Tower. The day had been what is called a "weather breeder," and the warm night sky was filling with black clouds. A storm was brewing in the southwest; the trees below him swayed and whirled their colored leaves, red and yellow, in the swinging electric lights.

"She did not care!" something kept saying in Robinson's brain; "she did not really care!" She whom he had always believed to be most delicately sensitive in her appreciation of the feelings of others! This was not the only time wherein he had felt that her tone rang false with the insincerity of using sacred things to further the interest of the moment. She had been thinking of the Maxwells; but she was thinking more of herself, perhaps more of him—his mind flew in terror from that contemplation. She had not been

genuinely sorry; she had been almost conscious of it, and yet she had intruded where genuine sympathy was the only thing that could excuse her presence. Who was changed—she or he?

He smoked on fiercely and quickly, reviewing his lost love, his ambitions frustrated by his mother's long illness, and his dogged holding on to certain unpractical ideals and occupations. He had grown older, he told himself; he had gained experience; yet was he not the same Robinson that had left Great Dulwich eighteen years ago? And she—where was she different? As a girl, she had started far ahead of him—it had been an effort on his part to keep up with her; but now the outward form and habiliments of life and thought were apparently the sole objects of her quest. Her quaint gowns, the studied scenic effects of her surroundings, her exclusively modern reading, her superficial thinking, all seemed mere coquetry—intellectual as well as material—clothing of the body and clothing of the soul put on alike for outward adornment.

They had drifted apart; but had it been altogether his fault? Robinson rose and slowly began pacing back and forth. How much was he to blame in this separation? The truth was that he had not quite dared and she had not quite dared. The root of their cowardice had been the fear that each might hamper the other's career, far more

than any dread of personal privation; but, looking back now, Robinson wondered if they had not done each other an injury. What would he have been, now, if he had had more incentive to strive in these last eighteen years? What would she have been if her thoughts and acts had been turned to better cares and sweeter sacrifices? Had they cheated each other of something essential, and so dwarfed their souls? In that case, was he not in her debt?

But there was another side. If they had rightly cared, would not the courage have been forthcoming, and was it not a happy thing for both that they had not bound themselves under a yoke that by now might have become intolerable? What would he feel if compelled to acknowledge that he was not free? There was the rub! Had his unspoken tender of love, and Sylvia Langdon's silent acceptance of it, made a link between them? A link which, during all these eighteen years, had been a source to him of a certain exquisite, dreamy satisfaction—until now! He had thought that he was free—honestly, simply free—to give his heart where he chose. He had come back, to be sure, full of dreams; but is a man to be bound by a dream in the face of reality? Of course he was free!

But Sylvia Langdon had claimed him, gently, sweetly, yet as one whose right was incontestable;

she, the soul of delicacy, had not been conscious of her calm appropriation because of her perfect assurance of his sanction. She had taken for granted that he would come away with her, and —how had it happened?—he had come; and Paula had smiled and let him go.

Oh, to be Tom Bent—off with the old and cheerfully, whole-heartedly on with the new! Had Sylvia Langdon a right to feel that, in returning to Great Dulwich, he had renewed and made tangible those old, unreal bonds?

Again he paced back and forth, back and forth, revolving the same thoughts over and over in his mind without coming to any conclusion. His pipe burned out, and he went to the edge of the Tower and knocked it against the coping. Everything was dark at the Deanery, and the lights in the park had been extinguished. The trees tossed dimly below, with a sound of restlessness and discontent as they rustled in the fitful wind. A rumble of thunder came threateningly from the south; but above that Robinson became aware of a harsher noise, more regular, like the steady crunching back and forth that is made by a file gnawing its way through iron bars. He leaned over and listened. "What can that be?" he said to himself, and tried to remember any piece of work of a character sufficiently urgent to be pressed forward by night.

Steadily, crunch, crunch, went the gigantic file.

Then he remembered! Those boys were probably trying to saw off the obnoxious belfry! The danger of the thing was what primarily appealed to him; in tearing away from the rest of the building, there was no knowing what damage the heavy little structure might do, or who might be caught in its downfall. He had been so occupied with his own thoughts that he had no idea of how long the noises at the library had been going on. He flung the trap-door back and, hurrying down all the many flights of stairs, ran out into the night, where he was greeted by a louder growl of thunder and a dash of rain. The park was pitchy black, for the Bishop was indulging in a streak of economy and all the electricity had been shut off at eleven o'clock. Robinson dared not run for fear of either losing the path or colliding with a tree, but he pushed on as rapidly as he could toward the library, stopping once in a while to listen for the noise of the file.

"Now, then, all together," he heard a voice saying; "it is bound to come!"

Robinson sprang forward at a run, but suddenly a hand was laid upon his shoulder. "What are you doing here?"

Robinson wheeled and caught his questioner by the arm. "I am Mr. Robinson. Who are you?"

"Maxwell."

"Out in the rain? And you have been running!"

"I got here as you came up. If I had any breath left I would tell them to come down."

Robinson lifted his voice and shouted. "What are you boys doing up there? Come down at once!"

"Push, fellows, push!" he heard in a low voice from the roof of the house, and the next minute, with an astounding crash, the belfry toppled over and reached the ground almost at their feet.

Robinson hardly knew which way to turn in the darkness, and as he stood there he heard a scramble on the roof of the library. The lightning flashed, showing a boy swarming down a rope. Robinson sprang forward and caught him by the shoulder. "Your name?" he said. The boy squirmed violently. From the southwest came another more brilliant flash of lightning. Robinson's grasp on his captive's collar weakened. There was another wrench, another squirm, and the fellow was off.

"Who was it?" said Professor Maxwell's voice behind him.

"He got away."

"Ah! Then you did not know him?"

"It is high time you were home," said Robinson eagerly, putting out his hand and taking Professor Maxwell by the arm. "You will be drenched to the skin. There is nothing more to do here. They have sawed off the belfry, and that is the end of it."

"I am afraid not."

Robinson hurried him through the park gates and across the road to his own house, and was about to leave him at the door when Mrs. Maxwell met them. "Come in quickly," she said; "I have something hot for you to drink."

"I am dripping," said Robinson, "and your husband ought to go upstairs at once and change his clothes."

"You must come in, Robinson," said Professor Maxwell, "if it is only for a moment. I want to speak to you."

Mrs. Maxwell turned away to bring her hot punch, and Robinson went forward reluctantly into the study. "You do know who that was!" said Professor Maxwell.

"He wrenched himself away from me."

"I had already heard his voice on the roof."

"Are you sure you recognized it?"

"No, not absolutely; but I know that you are sure of that boy's identity."

"I am not—and I never shall be."

"Is that the best thing for the boy?"

"It is the best thing for—all concerned. The fact is, boys do this kind of thing more for the sake of laying up treasures of reminiscence in the future than for actual mischief. Neither moth nor rust will ever corrupt nor thieves break through and steal the solemn joy that this youngster is storing

away for his old age in the remembrance that he had a hand in upsetting that belfry."

"You are better able to look at it lightly than I am. To my mind it shows an ingrained carelessness—a blindness to duty—" But here the Professor was interrupted by Mrs. Maxwell, who came in cheerfully with a pitcher and glasses.

When Robinson left the house a few minutes later the rain was still driving in torrents before the wind, but the sky was lighter, vaguely suffused with gray. From time to time, above the writhing branches and whirling leaves, the Tower sprang forth in clear, pure color against the pale violet of the lightning-cleft sky, only to be lost at once in blackness, whence—dimly emerging—it slowly settled upon the building beneath, a misty, unsubstantial bulk, vaguely threatening.

In the dark expanse of the lower hall Robinson wandered a few minutes, bewildered, until the western windows suddenly flared out in crimson magnificence, and he saw his way to the stairs. He climbed wearily to his room. He had a painful sense of impending calamity, of pressing decisions left in suspense, of heaviness and self-reproach.

## CHAPTER XXIV

ON the morning of the following day Bennie Maxwell had set about straightening the papers on the desk in the Bishop's library, and was preparing to begin work when some one knocked at the door. Without waiting for an answer, Ned appeared.

"What's wrong at home?" said Bennie, jumping up.

"Nothing. I haven't been there. I wanted to see you—alone."

"You can't; the Bishop may be here any minute."

"He won't be here for half an hour—I saw him up the road. He has gone to see Fanshie about the belfry business. He told me to come in and let you know he would be late."

"Well?"

"Oh, if you're going to behave that way, there's no use of my being here; but I did think that I might rely on you to help me out of this fix."

"I didn't know you were in."

Ned chuckled. "My being in depends somewhat, I suppose, on Robin."

"Did he catch you, then?"

"Catch me? Oh, yes, nicely! But he didn't keep me. I suppose he heard us from up there in the eyrie. Robin never goes to bed—spends all his nights smoking and baying the moon on his violin— He came down the middle path and quietly walked up to the front of the library, watched till the thing fell, and then—nabbed me."

"Did he get anybody else?"

"No, the other fellows went down the west side of the building."

"What did Robinson say to you?"

"Nothing. For a minute he held me like a vise; and then there came a flash of lightning, and his grip loosened——"

"Well?"

"Of course I twisted my arm away from him and ran."

"So—he let you go!"

"What!"

"Of course he did! He knew you; he meant to do it."

There was a short silence. "If I thought that," said Ned, "I—I'd almost feel obliged to walk straight—at least for the rest of the term. It would be pretty white of old Robin to do that. You see, they've got it down against me for painting the Museum, and if I'm caught this time, it's bound to go hard."

"You deserve it should."

Ned thought awhile. "What did he do it for?" he said at last.

"I suppose he thought father had worries enough."

"Pooh! What does he know about that?"

"They all know a lot more than you think. If you had seen how father looked this morning, trying to bear up and carry it off with a good face——"

"What business had Robin to go and tell if he wanted to save papa anxiety?"

"He didn't tell! Father was there."

"There! In all the rain? Did he see me?"

"He thought he recognized your voice—he wasn't sure."

"But, Bennie—Saltus said he oughtn't to get wet, or cold, or have any excitement, or——"

"Or anxiety; and since you've been good enough to provide him with a large dose of all four, I suppose there's nothing more to be said." Bennie turned with a business-like air to his papers.

"Is—is he all right this morning?"

"He is in bed."

Ned rose and went slowly toward the door.

"Where are you going?"

"Home."

"You are not to bother him!" Bennie sprang to the door and set his back against it.

"Damn it! Isn't he my father as much as yours? You are not the only one he cares for—nor the only one that cares for him! If you don't get away from that door I'll pitch you out of the window."

"What are you going to say to him?"

"That is between me and him: the only person on this earth—but mamma, of course—that cares a rap what becomes of me."

Bennie looked a moment at Ned's white, miserable face. "I care what becomes of you," he said, and moved aside.

Ned opened the door, and stood a moment with his back to his brother. "You needn't worry," he muttered; "I won't say anything to trouble him."

## CHAPTER XXV

ROBINSON saw Bennie in the course of that morning, and, being reassured as to Professor Maxwell's condition, did not go to the house to inquire.

He belonged to a quartette club that met at Mr. Bent's once a week, and when he went there that evening he found Tom lying, one-armed, long, and comfortable in a reclining-chair, playing cards with Harry Cogswell. "This is bad," said Robinson. "When I left Mrs. Denbeigh's yesterday I was under the impression that it wasn't much of a hurt."

"Carter says he's not to rise from this chair this evening," said Harry Cogswell.

"Carter and I disagree," said Tom, but he did not move. "By the way, I hear that you took a hand in pulling down the belfry last night? Professor Maxwell told me—Carter let me drive out there, under protest, this morning."

"Did Maxwell take much cold?"

"Enough to keep him in bed to-day. You really mean," he added after a pause, "that you don't know the young fellow you caught, out there?"

"It would be more truthful to say that I really do not mean to know the young fellow I caught, out there."

"I thought it might be that!" said Harry.

"Do you happen to know of any one who wants to take a troublesome boy in hand?" said Robinson.

"Why beat around the bush? You know it was Ned—sulky, unmanageable cub; whoever takes him in hand has his work cut out for him."

"The fellow is more unhappy than sulky," said Robinson; "but I think that if some one whom he admired—and who had, above all, the charm of novelty—would open Ned's eyes to the futility and cruelty of his present course, it might work a change."

"Ned Maxwell has had every influence for good that a boy could need!" said Bent. "Any decency in me I owe to his father. I was in a pretty bad way six or eight years ago. I never knew whether Maxwell intended to help me, or whether it merely happened that in him I found what I needed; but I owe him a debt that I can never repay——"

"He has a way of strengthening the foundations," said Harry thoughtfully. "You don't know how it's done; I don't believe he even knows he's doing it. You never feel as if he was butting in and messing about in matters he has no business to interfere with, like—some other people. He just is; that's all there is about it!"

The two older men looked at each other, smiling. Harry seldom expressed himself at such length.

"I suppose the first step to be taken in regard to Ned is to get hold of some one he is inclined to like," said Tom Bent.

"He likes Harry," said Robinson.

"I'd die for his father; but—I can't stand Ned!"

"His father doesn't need any one to die for him," said Bent grimly.

"There is good in the boy," said Robinson.

"But he's been completely spoiled by that set of cads who have taken him up on account of his voice," Harry added.

"Can he sing?" said Bent. "There is the operetta."

"He sings like an angel, but——"

"Of course we shall have to make him over, more or less," said Bent.

"It isn't going to be any too easy!"

Bent gave a short laugh. "I don't mean it to be —for Ned."

This talk was a relief to Robinson; but for the next few days, although he kept himself informed of Professor Maxwell's health, he was not able to go to the house. His work was heavy, and the social virus—at that time particularly active among the college people—had caused Great Dulwich to break out in a series of destructive festivities.

One afternoon, when Robinson had been called

upon to meet a great man at a tea at the Bishop's, he stayed rather later than usual, and was returning to the drawing-room to bid Miss Langdon good-by after a chat with Annchen at the tea-table in the dining-room. The lion had crossed the hall and was roaring gently in the library with the Bishop. Every one had left except Bennie Maxwell, who rose when Robinson came into the room, and hurriedly said good-by. With a slight gesture Miss Langdon arrested Robinson, who was about to follow.

"Do not go," she said; "I must have a word with you. Did you know that Professor Maxwell was really very ill?"

"I had not heard that—I inquired this morning."

"He is worse this afternoon; Henry Carter fears he has bronchitis. Of course, there is not the least danger of his life; but the worry and care and expense is something that they are hardly prepared for—and, then, there is Ned."

"What is wrong with Ned now?"

"Nothing that I know of definitely. He only continues to be generally unsatisfactory; and, as if he had not wasted enough time already, Tom Bent and Harry have managed to interest him in this operetta—Ned has a charming voice, you know. I told Bennie that I would try and use my influence."

"What for?"

"To induce them to give him up. Why should Ned waste time with those rich young fellows who can do so many things that he can't? He is already sufficiently extravagant and discontented."

"You must not interfere!"

She drew herself up with a stiff gesture that roused Robinson's instant opposition. "Surely," she said, "you must see the wisdom of breaking off this new intimacy! The Maxwells have hardly enough money to carry them through the year. Bennie is already at his wits' end to know where his next cent is to come from—how well it is that he has had strength to refrain from committing himself with Margaret! It is the only place where I have been really able to make my influence tell, and I have so longed to be of use! Have you never felt that longing to help?"

"Never! My one and only longing is to be permitted to mind my own business. The less we try to meddle with the world's normal course the better. Most of the good that we accomplish comes about by accident — inadvertently, as it were."

Miss Langdon's face flushed. "You take away my only occupation!" she cried.

"So far as I can see"—Robinson was feeling suddenly incorrigibly flippant—"setting things to

rights in this world is even a little beyond the capacity of the Supreme Being."

"Ah! You are not in earnest!"

"I am in serious earnest about Ned—Ned is in better hands than ours."

"You mean—" Miss Langdon reverently paused —"in God's hands?"

"No—in Tom Bent's."

"Oh!" said Miss Langdon.

Robinson hurried away, wondering and ashamed of the exasperated opposition that had so unexpectedly seized him. "If women would only let things alone!" he muttered. "I will go down to the Maxwells and see how matters really are!"

As he ran up the steps toward the door of the house somebody opened it to him from within. Mrs. Maxwell was standing in the hall with a telegram in her hand. "O Mr. Robinson!—I had hoped it was Bennie! I have just received the most annoying telegram—my Cousin Maria has died."

"I am sorry," said Robinson solicitously.

"Oh—so am I, of course! Still, I never did care very much for Cousin Maria—but my brother, James Ponsonby, who is her lawyer, telegraphs me that I ought to go to the funeral."

"Is it far away?"

"It is not only far, but inconvenient. I should have to be gone three or four days. James says

that I must come, because Cousin Maria has left me something in her will."

"You might regret it if you did not go."

"I know very well what she has left me—she always promised that she would, and it was sweet of her to do it—but it doesn't seem to me that merely for a set of blue and white Canton china I need leave my husband, who is ill, and take that journey to Williamston. I never bowed down to Cousin Maria, but, at the same time, I have no neglect to reproach myself with. She and I were sympathetic—about old furniture and such things. Oh, there is Bennie!" Before Bennie could insert his latch-key his mother had opened the door to him and poured out her disquieting news.

"Uncle James wouldn't send for you," said Bennie, "unless he thought you ought to go."

"I can't see why you force me to do it, Bennie. It isn't as if I had been truly fond of Cousin Maria. What will Mr. Robinson think of me? But, really, Cousin Maria had such a long nose!"

"Doesn't your going depend a little on how Professor Maxwell is?" said Robinson.

"Henry Carter says that William is not very ill and that good nursing is all that he needs, but—" She stood tapping her foot nervously on the floor, and Robinson, having heard the news he came for, left her to make her decision alone with Bennie.

"Can't I get out of it, dear?" she pleaded.

Bennie shook his head. "I really don't see how you can."

"But I haven't enough money! It is so near the end of the quarter."

Bennie flushed. "How much do you need?" he said, drawing out his pocket-book.

"The fare down there will be about ten dollars, and then there is that long ride in the coach—O Bennie, don't make me go!"

Bennie felt a moment's doubt as to the wisdom of doing so, but he did not allow his mother to perceive his indecision, nor did he let her know how empty his pocket-book was, after he had given her the little roll of bills for her journey.

## CHAPTER XXVI

WHILE Mrs. Maxwell was gone, Robinson went every afternoon to the house and sat for a while with Professor Maxwell. Young Carter, the doctor, had installed a trained nurse, and Robinson, although he noted the sick man's enfeebled condition, felt that there was no real cause for anxiety.

"My wife comes home to-morrow, Robinson, and before she gets here I want to have a few words with you," Professor Maxwell said on one of these afternoons. He stretched out his hand to Robinson who took it in both of his. For some moments there was silence in the room.

"Robinson," Professor Maxwell said, at last, "when the inevitable time comes for me to drop out—I should like to know that you will befriend those I leave behind. I shall go on, of course, as long as I can; but I may be helpless, and in that case the struggle—will be painful. With you I make no concealment of the fact that the temptation to follow in Moncrieff's footsteps has been strong; but—I mean to bide my time. Don't desert me, Robinson, when the shadows deepen! I

may become an object of horror, of anguish to those who are nearest me——"

"Never to me!" Robinson's voice was shaking. "Don't think of these things. Don't speak of them!"

"I wanted you to understand the worst plainly, and I have but little breath to waste in beating around the bush. In God's mercy I may die some other death; but even then, although they would be better off, the struggle for the children will be bitterly hard—promise to befriend them."

"There is no need of promises—I should have befriended them without."

"I shall strive to endure to the end. It leaves a better legacy—of courage—of strength. But —with the means always at hand—that, too, is a struggle—" He turned feebly and opened a little drawer at the bedside and brought out an ominous sealed tube, which Robinson remembered.

"May I take that away with me?"

"No, not yet. My strength has not gone from me so far as that. If I find myself defeated—or better, dying—I shall give it to you."

Here the nurse opened the door to let the doctor come in. Robinson, much alarmed, went downstairs and waited; before long young Carter came down slowly. Robinson stepped forward. "How is he?" he said.

"He is weak; I don't like the symptoms."

"He isn't the strongest man in the world, and he has worn himself out."

"Here is Nellie," said Robinson.

"Well, Nellie"—the doctor's tone changed—"I found your father getting along. He is a little weak, but that ought to be expected. If nothing goes wrong, we shall have him about by Thanksgiving. Good-by." He went, leaving Robinson somewhat clearer in his mind as to why the families of people seriously ill were sometimes so shocked and astounded at an unlooked-for issue.

"He always puts fresh heart into me," said Nellie.

The day following Robinson rang the bell at the little house in the red block, and the door, as it had been once before, was suddenly opened to him. "Oh," said Nellie, "I thought it was mamma!" Then her eyes brightened, and Robinson, turning, saw Mrs. Maxwell coming with Bennie. At the first glance he saw that she was in a state of great excitement, and seized his hat to leave; but Mrs. Maxwell detained him. "Don't go," she said, "I should like you to hear my news. Are you all here—all you children? Come upstairs to papa."

But the nurse, hurrying down, put up a warning hand. "The professor isn't quite so well to-day, Mrs. Maxwell. He mustn't see too many people."

"Do you think it would hurt him to hear good news?"

"If you tell it quietly; and, perhaps, the others had better not come."

Mrs. Maxwell led her train of children and Robinson into the study. "Wait here, all of you," she said.

"I'll bet Cousin Maria has left her some money," said Ned.

"Hush!" said Bennie; "you don't want to spoil the fun."

"Has she told you?"

"No, of course she hasn't!"

"What'll you bet she's left ten thousand?"

"I know it is only the blue and white china," said Nellie, "and perhaps some of the old furniture —that would be delightful!"

"No," insisted Ned, "it's money—ten thousand!"

"But why ten thousand?" said Bennie

"Well, I heard Uncle James say once that Cousin Maria ought to leave mamma at least that much, and—and Cousin Maria always did the least she could!"

There was no further comment for the next few minutes, but when Mrs. Maxwell came downstairs one of the younger boys ran to her and, catching her dress, whispered: "Mamma, Ned says Cousin Maria has left you ten thousand dollars."

"No, not ten thousand."

"How much, then?" said Ned. "Eight?"

"She has left us a great deal of money," said Mrs. Maxwell, sitting down, "a great deal of money. She has left us"—there was a momentary catch in her voice—"three hundred——"

"Three hundred!" interrupted Ned. "And she worth a good million!"

"She has left us three hundred—Ned, do be still!—she has left us three hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

There was an astounded pause. "Dear me, that means an income," said Nellie.

"Quite a respectable income," murmured Robinson.

"And yet it doesn't sound as much as just ten thousand dollars," Nellie added regretfully.

"How stupid of you!" said Ned. "Are you sure, mamma, that you haven't made a mistake? Isn't it three hundred and fifty? You know you do sometimes get figures a little crooked."

"Yes, Peggy, dear," said Bennie, calling her by a long disused pet name of his baby days. "I really think you must have made a mistake."

"Oh, how silly you all are!" cried Mrs. Maxwell. "She has really left us all that money! When he gets well, your papa need never worry again about those old schools in Great Dulwich. And I, who didn't want to go to the funeral!"

Robinson slipped quietly out of the room, and met the nurse in the hall.

"There is something about this case that I don't like," she said forebodingly.

Robinson's heart fell. He recognized the instinct which is born of practice and long experience. "How is he?"

"One is never sure with pneumonia."

"Is it that?"

"There is no doubt about it. There really hasn't been from the first day I came. Nasty disease—I hate it! But I wanted to ask you, Mr. Robinson, if you could come down this evening and stay with us through the early part of the night. Mrs. Maxwell seems excited—I want somebody here who will be able to keep the professor's mind easy."

## CHAPTER XXVII

LATER in the evening, when Robinson returned, the nurse met him at the head of the stairs. "He's worse—he's very much worse!" she whispered. "I shall persuade Mrs. Maxwell to take a rest now you are here. It will be hard enough for her to-morrow."

Robinson, who had come prepared to spend the night, listened to the woman's directions, and made himself ready for his watch. He was accustomed to illness. The long years that he had devoted to his mother had given him much skill, which the nurse recognized when she said, in tones of commendation: "You have done this before."

He seated himself now at a shaded lamp behind a screen, and, undoing a package of examination books, began to correct them. Mrs. Maxwell slipped quietly into the room, sat down for a few moments by the bed, and then, with a smile at Robinson, stole out again.

The hours slipped by. Robinson gave the medicines, moved noiselessly about doing small things to make the sick man comfortable, and when at last Professor Maxwell fell into an uneasy slumber, he sat watching the small fire on the hearth, following

the filmy bats'-wings of soot as, time after time, they fluttered, took fire, and glowed with tiny rows of sparks about their fringy edges.

This unexpected good fortune had already begun to have its effect in the peace and ease of mind it seemed to have brought. Robinson found himself blessing Cousin Maria for the wisdom she had shown in the disposition of her money. "It will do a great deal more good in the world than if she had left it to some society for the prevention of something," he thought.

Professor Maxwell stirred. Robinson sat up alert, glancing at the watch which lay upon the table. It was not time for any medicine, and he was about to settle back again in his chair when the sick man's voice called him faintly. Robinson went to the bedside. Professor Maxwell had tried to raise himself upon his elbow, but sank back, panting, upon the pillows.

"What is it?" said Robinson. "Do you want some water?"

"No, I only wanted to give you something—something here in the table drawer."

Robinson knew at once, and, pulling out the drawer, he took the sealed tube in his hand.

"Destroy it," said the other. "I—I—took it away from Moncrieff once—unavailingly; but I think that whatever the outcome had been, I should never have used it myself. Now God has been merciful; I shall have no need of it."

"I am very glad of this money, Maxwell."

"It gives me peace."

Robinson sat down close to the bed and bent forward eagerly. "Maxwell, you are not dangerously ill; you must not allow yourself to think so. I assure you that there are no complications; yours isn't even a really serious case of pneumonia."

Professor Maxwell's wide-open eyes, dark with tragic foreknowledge, looked fixedly into Robinson's. "I am going," he said; "not wilfully, not even willingly, only thankfully—for the release of it. And grateful, too, that I have not been permitted, with reckless fingers, to meddle in the infinite design."

He closed his eyes and Robinson moved slightly, as if to go back to his own place by the fire; but the sick man's hand groped toward him, and Robinson placed his own within it.

"I have been restrained," the weak voice whispered, "restrained from rushing headlong out of life; prevented from finding myself—when the irrevocable doors of violence had clanged to behind me—face to face with the gentle, beneficent messenger who is about to call me. From out the dark region to which he has escaped, Moncrieff's spirit of late has continually beckoned mine. What if in my last hour—when my will, weakened by his example, had succumbed to his supreme temptation—I had been able to see and know that, while the poverty I had so dreaded had been turned aside

from my people, the disgrace I had wrought would burden their hearts and minds from one generation to another, increasing with their increase?"

"They would have understood." Robinson's grasp tightened on the hand he held.

"My wife might have understood, perhaps Bennie; no one else. But I have been restrained—I have not been permitted, in my despair, needlessly to do this thing. And I have been so near it, Robinson, so near! God has mightily intervened, mercifully saved."

Robinson's grasp tightened again. It was as if physically, by his own strength, he would have withheld his friend from any farther journey toward the unseen. The fire died down at last and Robinson rose to replenish it. Professor Maxwell's eyes had closed, and he seemed to sleep.

The night wore on. Mechanically Robinson carried out the nurse's directions, absorbed in the care of the sick man until the clock, in the church tower near by, struck four, and he looked up, startled, as the door opened and Mrs. Maxwell hurried in.

"The nurse has just called me," she said. "I am quite rested. How does he seem?"

Robinson glanced at the bed. Professor Maxwell was lying quietly, with closed eyes. "It has not been a bad night," he whispered to her, and, with a gesture of farewell, left the room and went downstairs.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

THREE days later, in the early afternoon, Robinson was hurrying down the college path toward the gate when he met Tom Bent, who, after one quick look, exclaimed: "He is worse!"

Robinson's spoken answer denied the affirmation of his expression, and Bent was dissatisfied. "I have been taking lunch at the Deanery," he said; "it is Sylvia's and my birthday. When I was a youngster I used to be invited there on our birthdays. My father and mother encouraged the friendship—Sylvia was a good influence."

"She always was."

"Yes, but lately she has become too much addicted to—influencing. We have even had a falling out because I have not been quite amenable to-day." Bent's tone was not amiable.

"Her view of life is always colored by her great desire to be of help."

"And she has a quite abnormal belief in the efficacy of her individual efforts."

Robinson moved forward impatiently; he felt great reluctance to discussing Miss Langdon.

"You have heard of the death of Mrs. Maxwell's cousin, of course?" he said, as they left the park.

"Old Maria Ponsonby? Oh, yes; I saw it in the paper. I wish she had had the grace to leave something to Mrs. Maxwell; but that is one of the obviously good things that never happen."

"But it has happened!"

"How much? Enough to make any difference?"

"I understood Mrs. Maxwell to say that it was something like three hundred and fifty thousand—and a house."

"I am delighted! But"—Bent's face fell—"it will set Maxwell's mind at ease about the future, and I am afraid he will die. He can, now, you see."

"He says that he doesn't want to," Robinson answered quickly. "He would be glad to live, I think, and to enjoy the peace of working, for a while, under easier circumstances."

"He will not be able to get on without the spur; it has been a sharp one!"

"He is very much exhausted. The nurse fears that he has too little vitality left to fall back upon."

"That is the horror of it! These men wear themselves out as surely and as insidiously as the worst smart-liver of our most rapid set."

"Going, too, much in the same way. They pay for self-denial, for sacrifice, and for disinterested

labor in the same nervous degeneration that follows the most flagrant dissipation. Look at Moncrieff, and at what has been hanging over poor Maxwell!"

"I am like Moncrieff. I could never have borne the strain. Dear old Maxwell has had more courage than is ordinarily comprised in the make-up of common men. I shall always be the better for Maxwell. I have had temptations, and, God knows, I have not always overcome them! I have been in trouble and stress—I am now, if ever man was, and if I get strength and will to steer through it straight, it will be because of Maxwell!"

"He lies there dying"—Robinson's voice broke—"and courteously welcomes death as a guest that has been sent too soon, but who must not be allowed to suffer from the mistake, because his coming is the last good boon granted by a merciful Master."

"A merciful Master!" repeated Bent bitterly. "A Master who has grudged him one single day of relief or rest in all these toiling, unthankful years!" His eyes suddenly brimmed over, and he laughed in an embarrassed way as he drew out his handkerchief.

"It is true," said Robinson, "all true. I didn't know that any one else thought of it in that way. He certainly doesn't himself, even though he believes that his life hasn't counted for much."

"But he doesn't repine even at that! He plays the game! So did Moncrieff—except for the end."

"Poor Moncrieff!"

"Yes; if ever a man were justified——"

"So we all say."

"You think that we don't believe what we say?"

"Maxwell has made me see all that in another light." They had come to the steps of the Maxwell house, and the maid had opened the door.

"Professor Maxwell is no better," she said.

"May I speak to Miss Kennedy?" Robinson asked, seeing the nurse in the shadows at the other end of the hall.

"I will wait for you here," said Bent, and the maid closed the door.

As Bent stood on the steps he saw the Cogswells' carriage, with young Sylvia in it, driving in his direction; she bade the coachman draw up to the curb, and Bent went down to meet her. "Robinson has gone in to inquire," he said.

They waited in silence until Robinson came out and crossed the sidewalk to join them. He did not speak for a moment.

"What is it?" asked Bent at last.

"She said that his temperature was lower."

"That is a good sign, isn't it?"

"Who can tell?"

"Just what did she say?" Bent insisted.

Robinson told them the facts, and let them draw their own conclusions.

"It sounds better," said Sylvia cheerfully.

Bent was silent and thoughtful. "Where are you going?" he asked her.

"Miles into the country, to see a seamstress who lives beyond Fairfax."

There was a short embarrassed silence, which Robinson made use of to say good-by.

"Will you take me with you?" said Bent to Sylvia.

"If you want to come; but the day is cold and raw."

"We can drive back to your house and get something warm of Harry's for me," he said. "I have not been good for much with this wretched rib of mine, and I wasn't going to work this afternoon."

Without much show of pleasure Sylvia made room for him beside her, and after they had driven back to the house, for Harry's fur coat, they turned again toward the open country. "Do you see very much of Mr. Robinson?" she asked.

"Not so much as I should like. He comes in to our house every week to play in father's quartette."

"I wonder whether——"

"So do I."

"You don't know what I mean," said Sylvia a little petulantly.

"You wonder whether Paula will marry him."

"I don't believe he has asked her!"

"From all that I have been able to gather, I had imagined that you and Harry had other views for Robinson."

"I have changed my mind. Harry and I have been foolish."

"I can't see anything foolish in your imagining that a man might fall in love with your Aunt Sylvia."

Sylvia glanced at him gratefully. Put in that way, her speculations, and Harry's, seemed less reprehensible. "Still, I can't understand Paula," she said. "If Mr. Denbeigh were the great man that everybody insists that he was——"

"Not quite everybody."

"—I should think she would feel it a desecration to be interested in any one else——"

"Is she interested in any one else?"

"—And if he were the little man that you insinuate he was, then she ought to have had enough of marrying, once for all."

"A natural but youthful judgment."

"I really don't believe," proceeded Sylvia, "that she wants to marry at all. And for that reason I can't approve of the way in which she has taken possession of Mr. Robinson lately."

"She only wants to borrow him."

"That may be true; but there is danger that she may put him on the shelf, thinking that she will

want him before long, and then—forget him! Of course he could come down, if he wanted to."

"He is not the kind that would come down unless she took him down."

"He is not the kind that you do that to at all! Paula thinks, just now, that he might make her happy; but when it comes to a decision she is going to find out that she can't do it."

"On account of her devotion to Denbeigh?"

"She detested Mr. Denbeigh!"

"How do you know?"

"I know by the way she packed up the 'collection' when it went to Coldston. I helped, and there were some of those things from which her very fingers curled away! I don't think that she will ever want to marry again. That horrid Denbeigh was a kind of Keeley cure—she has lost her taste for it."

"Then where does Robinson come in?"

"He doesn't! Some day Paula will remember to take him down from the shelf, and when she has blown the dust off, she will return him to Aunt Sylvia!"

"I hope she will return him in better order than she has some of her crockery!" There was a tinge of bitterness in his voice.

Sylvia did not say anything for a minute or two. "There are a good many pieces of chipped crockery in the world," she said then. "Some of the

rarest specimens on papa's shelves are even—cracked." Her voice shook with faint laughter.

"Sylvia, don't you think that we are wasting a good deal of time over other people's affairs? How much longer are our own to remain laid upon the table?"

"There was to be two weeks' notice——"

"You have had six months, Sylvia."

Sylvia glanced at him and her face fell. "I know it," she said.

"Do you need those two weeks?"

"I am not sure that they are not needed—although it is not I that need them!"

"You are mistaken. I am of the same mind that I was in the spring."

"And Paula?"

"Who has been talking to you?"

"No one. I saw—the day we were upset."

"You could not have seen, because there was nothing to see."

"Are you sure, Tom?"

"Do you think that I am asking you to take a divided heart?" He raised his voice slightly, and Sylvia looked anxiously at the coachman's back.

Bent made a gesture of annoyance, but deftly changed the subject, and they did not renew it until after Sylvia had seen the seamstress, when they found that some slight accident had happened to the harness, and she and Bent walked on together

toward Great Dulwich, expecting the coachman to overtake them.

"Now Sylvia! What have you in your mind? What makes you think——"

"Let us leave Paula out of the question," said Sylvia, with dignity.

"By all means; this is a matter that concerns only you and me. Do you love me, Sylvia?"

"Do you love me, Tom?"

"You know that I do!"

"Do you love me—first?"

"Oh, first! Why will women always want to be the first!"

"I don't mean that I want to be the first. I knew that you cared for Paula once; that you and she were engaged; everybody knows it."

"We were to leave Paula out of the question."

"That you were engaged to another woman first makes no difference to me; just as it should make no difference to you if I had loved—oh, anybody, Mr. Robinson—before I loved you."

Bent's eyes smiled faintly at this unconscious admission.

"What concerns us is the present," Sylvia went on. "There was something in your eyes that day when you spoke to Paula that made me feel that all was not over. I do not think that I should have understood, if I hadn't seen how Mr. Robinson felt it—he and I—we were the same,

only he would not believe. He saw nothing but Paula that afternoon—and you, too, you stayed there——"

"Oh, child! Paula will be Paula to the end of the chapter; she will always be trying experiments with her own heart—and breaking ours in the process."

"If I marry a man, no other woman must have the power to break his heart."

"Please God, if you marry me, no other woman shall! No other woman has."

"But I haven't it."

"It would break my heart, Sylvia, to discover you less fine than I think you! Can you say, truthfully, that you do not love me? Do you pretend, for an instant, that you do not believe that I want you, dear?"

"I ought to leave you free."

"Can't you see that I don't want to be free?"

"But you do. Look at Paula and then at me!"

"Is that sincere?" said Bent. "Do you really mean that you think I would compare you?"

"I want to believe you, Tom!"

"Then you care for me?"

"You know I care! I shouldn't have told you, if I hadn't seen that in some way you have found it out; but, if we agree to part now, I shall not break my heart. I might have thought once that I should. When you dived for Annchen, two weeks

ago, and I waited and waited for you to come up, I was quite sure that, if you lost your life there in the river, I should never know happiness again. But now everything is different. I looked forward, and things wore a beautiful face—a face all merry and glad and full of smiles. But now another face looks at me. When we were children, do you remember teaching us how to save each other's lives when we got upset on the river? We did such bold, brave things; we never lost our presence of mind! But when it came to the time when we were compelled to act in earnest, everybody behaved without the least thought; we all did things hit or miss, as they came up, and I am doing the same now. Last spring I wasn't sure of myself, but I did think that the day would come when I should tell you that I loved you without a single doubt."

"You don't love me unless you trust me."

"I cannot be contented with—half a loaf."

"I am not offering you that! You have my best, my truthful, absolute best. You are the one woman of all women for me!"

"Does not Paula stand between?"

"How can I speak of Paula in a way that will reassure you without appearing treacherous?"

"You know very well that I would not listen to anything that was treacherous to Paula."

"Sylvia," said Bent, coming to a stand-still, "will you marry me?"

Sylvia turned away her head. The carriage was coming down a narrow side road through the fields, and would overtake them in a minute.

"Sylvia!" repeated Bent.

"Yes—I will marry you."

"You trust me? I will not have you without that, much as I love you."

"Of course, it means that, too—but there is the carriage."

"You have made me very happy," he said in a low voice, when they had started off again.

Sylvia's eyes were full of tears; she looked out over the brown fields of stubble, and wondered if the face of fulfilment would always differ so sadly from the face of promise!

## CHAPTER XXIX

THE evening of Sylvia's drive into the country with Tom Bent Miss Langdon was dining out, and the Bishop had taken that occasion to go over to the Cogswells'. He came in before his daughter had returned, very slowly, very thoughtfully, and sat down in front of the drawing-room fire. Miss Langdon was later than usual, and when he heard the horses outside the Bishop rose from his chair and stood in front of the fireplace. "Did you stop at the Maxwells'?" he asked as she came to the drawing-room door.

A shadow of annoyance crossed her face. "I am ashamed to say that I didn't think of it!" she said. "The house was quite dark as we drove by."

"The house was dark, indeed," he said gravely.

"Has anything happened?"

"He died suddenly this afternoon."

"Oh, how sorrowful! And yet not so bad as it might have been—I suppose you know that old Maria Ponsonby left Mrs. Maxwell her money?"

"Yes," said the Bishop indifferently. Balanced against the life of a man like Professor Maxwell, the money did not count much with him just then.

"I suppose it robbed death of a good many terrors," he added after a moment's thought. "Maxwell was anxious about the future of those children —Bennie is like him, fortunately."

Miss Langdon's face clouded. "He will probably go back to his course in medicine and marry Margaret Fanshawe now," she said.

"Yes? Are they engaged, too?"

"Too?"

"Oh!—I had forgotten to tell you. Tom Bent dined at Henry's to-day; it seems that he and little Sylvia got themselves engaged this afternoon."

"This afternoon?" There was a sharpness in Miss Langdon's tone that drew the Bishop's attention to her more keenly.

"Had you known anything about it?"

"Nothing, except that it is most unexpected, not merely to me, but to Tom Bent, too, I might say! I can't understand it! He almost spoke this afternoon as if he cared for another woman! At least," she amended, for her father's eyes had an uncomfortable way of compelling accuracy, " at least, our talk after luncheon was about another woman. Of course everybody knows that he has always been in love with Paula."

"I have considered the affair of Paula as definitely over for a good many years. Tom would never make Paula happy, I think."

"Why do you say that? They have the same

interests; they are both fond of the world and of society; they are both rich. It seems to me that they have a great deal in common. I have always hoped that it would come right, between them, in the end. Indeed, when he left here this afternoon, I think that he was convinced that it would."

"Are you quite sure that you realize what you are saying?" interrupted the Bishop severely. "Tom has asked your niece to be his wife to-day. Do you think he would do that if he still continued to care for Paula?" The Bishop's voice was uncompromising, and Miss Langdon felt her heart fluttering uncomfortably.

"It is certainly very difficult to understand. You know, papa, that I shouldn't for a moment suspect Tom of anything dishonorable; but this looks, to say the least, precipitate."

"It does not appear to me in that light. You have probably mistaken silence on Tom's part for consent to your own plans."

"I am sure," said Miss Langdon, after a moment's thought, "that little Sylvia ought to be a very happy woman. Of course, she isn't exactly—" She did not finish her sentence, but sat looking down at the rug in front of her. It hurt her to think that she had so misunderstood Tom Bent. Had he been laughing at her silently as she had tried to demonstrate to him that his heart was still Paula Denbeigh's? No. With the

clairvoyance of her unhappy love for Robinson she divined Bent's heart perhaps better than he allowed himself to do. There had been something in his face that afternoon—something like a struggle—which, at the time, she had not fully understood; now it flashed across her that, instead of being an influence for good, she had been carefully leading Tom Bent into temptation!

"Of course," the Bishop was saying weightily, "Sylvia's mother told you the situation in the early spring?"

"Anna?" said Miss Langdon, looking up in surprise. "What situation? She never told me a word."

"Tom asked Sylvia to marry him in May, I think, but she very wisely felt that it was better not to decide at once. Anna told me at the time. Surely she mentioned it to you?"

"No, she never spoke of it—neither did Sylvia."

"Perhaps they were right. The less discussion these matters receive the better. I, for my part, am very glad of this engagement. Little Sylvia will make Tom a better wife than Paula would."

"I doubt it," said Miss Langdon. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were brilliant with anger. Tom's taking his future into his own hands was almost like a blow in the face.

The Bishop studied her curiously. He won-

dered if some of the workings of her mind were not obscure even to herself. Why should she wish Tom Bent to marry Paula? This Robinson! Was he playing fast and loose? The Bishop distastefully put the thought from him; he could not endure to think ill of his neighbor. Still, he had not been blind throughout the early part of the summer, and again in the autumn, to the interest that his daughter had taken in Robinson. With the help of his iron memory, he reconstructed the whole story. It did not please him. Robinson had always loved his daughter. He had come back on her account, and she—the Bishop gave his head an impatient shake. Sylvia should have had more self-control! There was something unwholesome in an affection which was beyond control, and things unwholesome, in the Bishop's judgment, partook slightly of indecency! Miss Langdon was nearly thirty-nine—an age when affairs of the heart were undignified; and yet, and yet, if it were in his power to advance her happiness—why not?

The Bishop rose to say good-night. "I suppose we shall have to be thinking of Moncrieff's successor," he said and sighed.

Miss Langdon's ever-ready flush mounted to her face. He wished, impatiently, that her color were less unmanageable. There was a lack of reserve in this inability to conceal any sudden emotion! "What do you think of Robinson?" He felt

himself unspeakably brutal; but there were certain things of which he must have a definite assurance.

She was not his daughter for nothing. "Would he care to take it?" she said indifferently.

"Would he not have reason to congratulate himself on getting it?"

"Every reason—if he wanted it; but I have seen nothing that would lead me to believe that he wished to stay in Great Dulwich."

"No? Then why is he here?" said the Bishop, who had no conception of actions which were not founded on convictions.

"I cannot say; but that he doesn't care so very much about remaining, either here or anywhere else in this country, is proved by his having refused a professorship of English literature at Coldston."

"At Coldston! When was it offered him?"

"Early in the spring, before he came here," she said steadily, and, getting up, she moved about the room, leaving things in order for the night. "I tried to use my influence with him to get him to accept it."

The Bishop followed her with his eyes, baffled. Still, he was reasonably sure that he was making no mistake in regard to Robinson and his daughter.

## CHAPTER XXX

ALL had been confusion and terror at the Maxwells'. Suddenly, without warning to any of his watching family, the professor's tired heart had stopped. It had been late in the afternoon, and he had seemed more comfortable. The doctor had driven away and the nurse had gone to her room for a few hours of rest. Professor Maxwell's room was at the back of the house; two or three vacant lots stretched between it and the Cogswell place, which rose with a gentle slope, its thick grove of oak-trees standing out, deep red, beneath the declining sun. Mrs. Maxwell went to the window and raised her hand to draw down the blind.

"Leave it up—I like the light," he said faintly.

"But you must sleep."

"I shall sleep, never fear. Put another pillow under my head and turn me toward the window."

She did as he said, and sat down near him, leaning back against the post at the head of the bed. The sun grew redder and redder as it sank into the level-lying strata of purplish clouds.

"It is very beautiful," he murmured.

"Very," she said softly.

He moved his hand along the covers toward hers, and she slipped her own beneath it. "We have been so happy!" he said.

"Please God we shall be happier in the future!" she whispered.

"He is very good."

She heard him give a little sigh, and sat there, still holding his hand, watching while the sun went down behind the trees.

It slipped and slipped, and the dark oak-trees stood out, deep red, against it. A wonderful yellow flooded all the sky. She bent forward cautiously and looked at him. His eyes were closed, and he was smiling. Scarcely daring to stir, she leaned back again, still holding his hand, contentedly watching the color fade from the sky. A very few minutes passed, and the darkness began to gather. She could see the lights, shining clear white, here and there along the road in front of the Cogswell place, and from time to time an electric car, cheerful and homely, rolled by, with its glowing windows and sparkling trolley.

His hand was growing chilly outside the covers there. He was strangely quiet!

She started forward, bending her face close to his. He still smiled. That was all! She did not call the children or the nurse, but sat down again quietly beside him, as if to continue her watch—

it was her right. He had gone, but she wished to be alone with him. She could still wait upon his soul, which lingered—she knew, she was sure—before it fared forth beyond her. It was thus he would have wished it to be.

"Good-by, best beloved!" she whispered. "Good-by!"

Then all at once the feeling came to her that perhaps it was not the end. Calling wildly, she ran for the nurse. The children who were in the house hurried upstairs; lamps were lighted; but one by one, as they gathered around the bedside, the same silence fell upon them that had come to her at first. All unconsciously, and without consulting one another, they felt that this was as he would have them: still and calm before the great and solemn triumph of his face. Time enough for desolation in the days to come; now, in some mysterious way, even the youngest of them felt that he forbade them to mar this hour by small regrets.

A good man had gone! Yet not gone—only changed. He had lived, and mankind were the better. He had died—his life had been given for the race, he had led a forlorn hope; men felt it, and yet—so simple and unassuming had been his courage—they did not know that a hero had left them.

But all the little city mourned; and on the day when they carried him away from his home—

carried him with their own hands, loving the burden—long crowds of black-robed people streamed toward the college chapel. Outside, the grass was trampled with the feet of hundreds who could not gain admittance. They followed as he was carried to the college cemetery, all the people walking, silent, grave, uplifted; touched with the spark of Eternal Life.

## CHAPTER XXXI

IT was the first week in December, and the last slow turns of the screw of cold had clamped Great Dulwich, shivering, in the train of winter. A pale bright sun shone through the few red leaves that still rustled dryly on the oak-trees in the park, and the dusty middle path rang hard under the feet of the hurrying students, who raced from building to building as if in hopes of accumulating sufficient animal warmth to counteract the chill of the lecture rooms.

As soon as he could, Robinson gave up the city schools and settled down to what he hoped would be a winter of quiet work. Mr. Maxwell's death had isolated him in spirit, and the time he gave—during the first hard days—to Mrs. Maxwell and the children detached him in reality from the world about him. In this little space of leisure and peace his mind seemed to clear. He looked back at his troubled thoughts, on the night when the belfry had been destroyed, as upon a confusing dream. He was ashamed of the part he had assigned Miss Langdon, and, accusing himself of fatuity, tried to forget—not without success.

As the weeks passed he began again to go frequently to the Gates place, either when his lectures were over in the afternoon or later at night, at the close of his day's work. The biography, since early in November, had apparently been forgotten; before that, Mrs. Denbeigh had begun to listen more favorably to Robinson's repeated suggestion that she should put the work into other hands, and although she had refused to allow him to open the subject with D'Orsey, she had given him to understand that she would do so herself as soon as Mrs. Gates—who expected to go South with Annchen in December—had left home.

But December had come, Mrs. Gates had gone, and Denbeigh seemed forgotten. Robinson was too well content with the oversight to quarrel with it. He felt himself on the verge of a great joy that would render him the last man on earth to insist upon the perpetuation of Denbeigh's memory. Life just then for Robinson was filled with sunshine, whatever the skies. The love of all the world for a lover exists mainly in the self-consciousness of the lover, and Robinson felt that all his little world was delicately, reticently sympathetic; but he went about shielding the flame of his happiness with careful fingers and taking no one into his confidence.

Still, it gave him great pleasure to see the change wrought in the Bishop's attitude toward him. He

was invited more frequently to the Deanery, and questioned minutely upon his plans, his tastes, and his hopes for the future. In the heart of every Great Dulwich man there was always an altar dedicated to the Bishop, much of whose unpopularity was due to his obstinate refusal to mount any of the shrines erected in his honor; but with Robinson, of late, the Bishop had sunnily allowed himself to be admired. "Since he no longer fears that I may be going to deprive him of his daughter the dear old boy is actually trying to like me!" Robinson thought gratefully, and gave his inquisitor all the irrelevant information he could.

Robinson's ability to do as he chose was much enhanced by the fact that he always did it without any flourish of trumpets. He was thus free to linger in Mrs. Denbeigh's library as often and as long as he wished without attracting much attention. Mrs. Denbeigh's shining place in the gay society of the city proper dazzled the eyes of all who knew her quite to the exclusion of so shadowy a possibility as Robinson. There had been a prince, a stray duke, and one or two distinguished members of the House of Commons in Great Dulwich that autumn. Mrs. Denbeigh's effect upon them, and the number of times they had been seen with her, had been a matter of careful note. Even his engagement had been barely sufficient to quench periodic revivals of interest in Tom Bent's *status*;

but Robinson—as a temporary instructor in the college—in the eyes of Great Dulwich had no *status*, so far as Mrs. Denbeigh was concerned; although nothing would ever make him aware of it.

Still, Robinson's goings and comings were not destined to pass wholly without observation. A man can almost always count on one person—otherwise indifferent to him—to whom his movements are of absorbing interest, and—besides Tom Bent and Sylvia Cogswell, who made an occasional discreet conjecture—D'Orsey kept Robinson well in view. "I suppose you know, Robinson," he said one evening at the commons dinner-table, "that there was a meeting of the Trustees yesterday morning?"

"Isn't there always one early in December?"

"But this one concerns you. Moncrieff's place must be filled sooner or later—you haven't heard anything?"

Robinson took offence at D'Orsey's inveterate habit of acquiring information. "It is rather soon to think of filling Moncrieff's place."

"The instruction must go on. Of course you've sent in your letters?"

"What letters? I had no letters to send."

"Letters of recommendation. It's always done in Europe—men send in volumes when they want a place."

"But I don't want a place."

"Do you mean to say you haven't sent in anything to the board? Why, Robinson, you probably can command more valuable letters than any man here!"

"A man can't advertise himself in that way," said Robinson indifferently.

"You had better, if you care anything for the position."

"I am not sure that I do care for the position."

"What were you thinking of doing next year?" D'Orsey was even more alert than before.

"Oh—going back to Italy—perhaps!" Robinson nodded his head as if his destination were somewhere east of the commons wall.

"But, man, man, that is no way to get ahead in the world! This is the Bent professorship!"

"They are not going to offer me the Bent."

"But even the salary of an associate professorship is better than what you already have. A man can afford to marry on that, especially if he has a small private income of his own. The Bishop was speaking of it the other day."

"If the Bishop expects us to marry on the salaries we're getting now, he must take more pains to keep up his supply of heiresses," said young Devinney. "He's been allowing it to run scandalously low lately."

"With a sufficiently rich woman, Devinney," said D'Orsey slowly, "one might afford to cut the whole thing—and go abroad."

"I'm not asking to cut the whole thing. If only the wealthy parent of the young lady I'm desperately in love with——"

"Which young lady?" cried the others.

"You all know mighty well."

"We know all of them mighty well," said the man next him; "but not which."

"If Bennie Maxwell wasn't such a nice fellow," said Devinney dreamily, "and if he wasn't in mourning for his father, his life wouldn't be worth an instant's purchase."

Robinson, after D'Orsey had spoken, had pushed his chair back from the table, but he waited a moment, apparently amused, and then, under cover of the laughter that had followed Devinney's last sally, he rose and left the dining-hall. As he passed the foot of the stairs he noticed a long envelope protruding from the mouth of the letter-box, and stopped to take out his mail; then, without examining further, he ran up the many steps that led to the Tower.

When he got to his room he threw his bundle of letters upon the table and turned his back upon them while he lighted his pipe. "D'Orsey's a cad!" he muttered, and, drawing a chair to the fireplace, he sat down.

He knew very well that the official envelope was a communication from the Board of Trustees. He did not wish to look at it; it intimated the approaching necessity of a decision.

What would her wishes be?

The Bent professorship—if they really had offered it to him—appraised a man at a certain figure, not a low one in the scale of scholarly values. The Bent professor could offer his wife that intangible, though frequently burdensome, possession, a "position"; but, on the other hand, a designated professorship labelled a man, narrowed his range. Robinson considered it belittling to lecture exclusively upon certain divisions of a subject of which all the branches were equally interesting, and to him the infinite possibilities of the nameless seemed far more distinguished than the safe honors of the definitely named.

Nevertheless, an associate professorship would put a man on the spring-board. Now Robinson felt no desire to swing his arms and bend his legs and fly off into space; and he also objected seriously to any decision in regard to the direction in which he should jump.

He reached behind him negligently and took up the envelope.

So—they had offered him the associate professorship!

It was really a great piece of effrontery on the

part of the Board of Trustees of Great Dulwich College!

And the Bishop had said that a man could marry —on that!

Robinson threw the envelope back on the table and sat staring at the fire.

Below there, in the college park, was a tiny cottage. Its library opened out on the river bank with latticed windows; he remembered its open fireplace and the ancient, heavy beams that crossed its ceiling. None of the men who had lived there had ever done that library justice!

He saw, in a sort of dream, what his life might be in that little, warm, quaint, well-kept house.

Day would follow day in unbroken peace; there would be long evenings of work, as they sat at the study table with the logs blazing in the fireplace nearby; there would be generous hospitality, old friends, properly served meals, well-trained servants—Sarah, perhaps!

Robinson sprang to his feet, striking the fire-irons as he did so. There was a crash on the hearth, a clang of metal, a spurt of burning coals on the rug. The tongs shook in Robinson's hands as he picked them up. He was frightened at the tyrannous persistence of this old, old dream.

## CHAPTER XXXII

WHEN a man feels an uneasy suspicion that he has twisted his sense of right and wrong in another's behalf, he looks for speedy gratitude. During the whole course of his administrative life the Bishop had never before used his influence with the Board of Trustees consciously to further his own ends, and, to be satisfactory, Robinson's thankful acceptance of the associate professorship should have arrived with an alacrity only a little less than abject; but when several days went by with no word from him, the Bishop was extremely annoyed.

At last, late one afternoon, when her visitors had gone and Miss Langdon sat alone by the tea-table, the Bishop came across the hall to the drawing-room with a letter in his hand and a slight flush upon his cheek. "Do you happen, Sylvia," he said, "to have had any talk with Mr. Robinson in regard to this professorship?"

"I haven't seen him for more than a week."

"I fail to understand Mr. Robinson's attitude. He asks for a month longer in which to give the matter consideration, and, in case of his acceptance,

he desires a year's leave of absence in which to prepare for the position."

"He doesn't feel himself prepared?"

The Bishop read the letter over again. "He might at least have made some motion to come to me personally," he said stiffly. "The only excuse he offers for his present delay is that he was occupied with some business for Mrs. Maxwell."

"I can't understand why—since he was so undecided—he didn't decline at once."

"Decline?"

"He refused a much better position in the spring. You must see that, in his heart, he can't care to connect himself with any small provincial college."

"Really, my dear, even the *cachet* of Coldston's approval—for I suppose you mean Coldston—does not blind me to the fact that Great Dulwich has done a man of so little experience as Mr. Robinson an honor in offering him an associate professorship——"

"I thought they had offered him the Bent!"

"The Bent!"

"If you take the pains to inquire, papa, you will find that Mr. Robinson has already made himself a reputation."

"It is not probable that I should have nominated Mr. Robinson without making inquiries, and—I acknowledge that he is rather better known than I had heretofore imagined. Still—the Bent pro-

fessorship! *Upon my word!*" The Bishop rose and walked up and down the drawing-room until the teacups rattled in their saucers. Miss Langdon rang for Sarah to come and take away the tray.

"I wish you would write," said the Bishop, "and ask Mr. Robinson to come and dine with us this evening. Is there any one else expected?"

"Not this evening," said Miss Langdon, going obediently to her desk; "but isn't it rather short notice?"

"May I beg you to be kind enough to do as I request?"

Miss Langdon well knew the value of a little opposition. Taking up her pen, she began to write. The Bishop watched her gloomily until Sarah had left the room.

"Do you mean to tell me," he then said explosively, "that Robinson expected the Bent professorship?"

Miss Langdon's pen scratched on; she finished her note, sealed it, and rang for some one to take it to the Tower. "The Bent professorship?" she asked dreamily, turning away from the bell. "Really, papa, I shouldn't be surprised to find that Mr. Robinson didn't even know of its existence."

Robinson came. If he was surprised—at the abrupt invitation and the absence of other guests—he did not show it. In fact, he did not feel it; it

was of a part with the Bishop's late kindness! Probably they were lonely, he and his daughter—it had been a gloomy day.

Acting on this theory, Robinson made himself as agreeable as he knew how during dinner; although later, when, at the Bishop's request, Miss Langdon was pouring coffee in the library, he felt —after a quiet glance at the clock—that he had fairly earned the right to leave in three-quarters of an hour, which was all that could be asked of a man who hadn't had his after-dinner——

"Do you smoke, Robinson?" said the Bishop, handing him a box of cigars.

Robinson was startled. "Do you, sir?"

"Once in a long while I find it pleasanter to join my friends. My only objection to tobacco is that it will deprive us of my daughter's society." He offered Robinson a lighted match as he spoke.

Miss Langdon rose, with her cup in her hand.

"Then you won't stay?" said her father genially, as he held the match to his own cigar and puffed at it bravely.

She hesitated, but the Bishop, his cigar between his fingers, got up and politely opened the door and kept it open until she had left the room and crossed the hall, to spend an anxious hour in the drawing-room.

When they joined her, she saw that all had not been going well. Robinson's eyes were dancing

with freakish amusement, and the Bishop, his unsmoked cigar still between his fingers, stood very straight, as if affronted. Her heart sank; and in her anxiety she had no power to keep Robinson there any longer than the few minutes courtesy demanded.

When he had gone, the Bishop tramped up and down the room three or four times in silence.

"There is a certain—ah—flippancy, yes, flippancy, in Robinson!" he said at last. "It was impossible to bring him to any contemplation of serious subjects. Even his own specialty did not interest him in the least; he slid away, with a jest, every time I attempted to bring it up."

"You talked about——"

"Art—yes, art—for one entire hour; and I regret to say that his manner was most discouraging, most discouraging!"

Miss Langdon's lip twitched. "But he was asked to lecture on English literature," she objected.

"At any approach to that he shied away like a balky horse from a newspaper in the road. I happened to mention Shakespeare—Shakespeare, mark you—and he said—he actually dared to say—Oh, I'll not repeat it! I'll not repeat it!" And the Bishop hurried back to his library and opened all the windows; but whether to air it of smoke or of heresy Miss Langdon could not tell.

One thing was clear: in exact proportion to the effort her father had made to broaden the points of contact—this was one of her favorite phrases—he had succeeded in widening the gap between himself and Robinson. The Bishop's advances were not usually received with flippancy—"yes, flippancy" —she laughed forlornly. Iteration and exasperation were coincident, if not synonymous, in the case of the Bishop; and yet his late burst of ill-temper was less serious than it seemed, in that it was not mere indifferent hostility but the legitimate vexation of a man who has a right to be annoyed at the frivolity of a member of his own family. Miss Langdon consoled herself with the reflection that she had seen him even more out of temper, and for less cause, with Mr. Cogswell. It was also reassuring to think that the Christmas vacation began the next week; she had a vague hope that Robinson's greater leisure, and her father's reverence for the season's good-will, would bring about a better state of feeling. The Bishop always tried to rectify his small misunderstandings at Christmas time—about his large ones he seldom troubled himself, these being matters of principle.

The raw, cold Thursday on which Robinson had dined with them had ended in a fierce wind and a heavy fall of snow. He tried to see Miss Langdon on the Sunday after, but she and the Bishop had gone to dinner in the city, and on Monday, when

he made a second attempt, he met her at the gate in the hedge.

"I am going down to the bridge to see the toboggan slide that Tom Bent has built in the athletic field," she said. "Come with me now and we can return for a cup of tea later. Sylvia and the other young girls are making the best of this chance to coast in the absence of the students."

Robinson fell in at her side and they went down the road together, crossing the bridge to the farther end. It was four o'clock; the sun was setting and the bare branches of the trees in the park on the opposite bluff were drawn upon the glowing disk like etchings on a jewel; the Tower soared above everything—black against the red of the sky—its long reflection wavering mysteriously in the dark stillness of the waters at the foot of the hill; but, from beyond the park woods, a last shaft of sunlight swept across the river and the snowy fields, leading, in a long, rose-colored path, to the crowded toboggan slide whence came the voices and pleasant laughter of the young people.

"See that girl!" said Robinson. "She is going down standing."

Miss Langdon's far-sighted eyes had taken in the flying figure a moment before; she had opened her mouth, as if to speak, and then had fallen silent.

"Beautiful!" cried Robinson. "Have you no idea who it is?"

"I really can't say," she began, then, blushing a deep red: "It may be Paula—it is Paula!" She gave a quick sigh of relief; the temptation not to know had been strong.

But Robinson's eyes were wholly for Mrs. Denbeigh. Smiling slightly, he watched her out of sight. "I might have known," he said softly; "but I thought she had gone to Durham."

"Is she going to Durham for Christmas?" inquired Miss Langdon, and her heart gave a great bound of satisfaction.

"Didn't you know it? Mr. and Mrs. Cogswell are arranging a party, or rather young Sylvia—" Robinson stopped; he had said "young Sylvia" quite inadvertently. "I had hoped that you were coming with them," he added. "I am going myself on Wednesday."

The kindness of his tone was maddening. Her face grew pale. She shivered and drew her furs closer about her throat. "My sister knows that I am not fond of Durham," she said indifferently; "when they plan these excursions they never ask me. Who else is going?"

"D'Orsey is asked; and Bent, of course; Margaret Fanshawe, too—and Bennie Maxwell."

"Bennie! So soon after his father's death? I hope he is not thinking of doing a thing like that!"

"You mustn't try to dissuade him!" said Robinson quickly. "Remember that the boy is tired

and troubled; the change will do him good—always, of course, if your father can spare him."

She drew herself up with the stiff air of offence that invariably annoyed Robinson because it was so obviously intended to be stately. "Under his present circumstances I cannot advise Bennie to join such an exceedingly gay company. I am even a little surprised that you should countenance his going yourself."

"Yet I wish him to go! Especially with this company," said Robinson, with meaning. "Couldn't you reconsider?"

"My advice may not be asked."

"Do you never give it without being asked?"

She looked at him suspiciously, but was quickly convinced of his singleness of meaning. "I should like to for once," she said, with a sudden change of manner. "Should you regard it as an unwarrantable impertinence on my part"—he made a gesture of polite deprecation—"if I were to ask you what you think of doing about your appointment?"

"Oh, that appointment! You will never know how glad I should be not to do anything about it!"

"That being out of the question——?"

"You see, I don't want to be compelled to specialize, to concentrate. If I do my best, I must have a great deal of space to work in; for, by some inscrutable dispensation of Providence, I was created —diffuse."

"What of your reputation? You cannot have been created absolutely devoid of ambition!"

"Ah, but I was—absolutely! Moreover, to a man whose youth has been intellectually free, slavery, at middle-age, is not attractive."

"Think of your friends! Of those who—care for you!"

"To those who care for me"— Robinson's face softened—"a shred of reputation, more or less, makes no difference."

"But look at it reasonably—you are giving up an excellent opportunity for advancement; you are risking your future——"

"The only future I really care about—" He was looking across the snow to where the slender, standing figure was again preparing for its flying rush down the slope; he was frowning slightly, and his eyelids were drawn together in a near-sighted effort to see distinctly. "I wonder if that is safe!" he broke off anxiously.

She started forward and began to walk rapidly toward the other side. Robinson—absorbed as he was in watching until Mrs. Denbeigh should reach the lower slope in safety—did not notice that Miss Langdon had withdrawn, and she had almost crossed the bridge before he overtook her. "It is cold," she said, shivering; "so bitterly cold, now the sun has gone."

Robinson was perturbed—but with that vague

and readily assuaged alarm men feel in the presence of the inconsistent disabilities of women; she had come down the hill, he thought, with the winged tread of a girl of twenty; why go up with the wounded mien of a stricken dove—whatever that was? Still, noticing that the climb was making her breathless, he walked a little slower, wondering if he had seemed discourteous about the appointment. "In regard to the matter we were speaking of," he began, with an effort at ease, "I know that if I accepted the professorship and gave a strict attention to certain limited requirements, my reputation, at the end of some ten or fifteen years, might become a perceptible quantity. It wouldn't bulk very large; but I think I may say I should be known; and I really don't care to be known."

"Yet you are—already," she murmured.

"Hardly in that way."

"And so you mean to decline?"

"I am trying hard not to," he answered whimsically.

"You don't take it seriously." Her tone was weary, as if the source of interest had suddenly failed.

"How can I take it seriously? I don't need an associate professorship, neither do I need a new overcoat—in my case, the one is as much an outside garment as the other—and both are burdensome."

They went on in silence until they had gained the top of the hill and turned toward the Deanery.

"Then you will not even consider it?" she asked, stopping at the entrance in the hedge.

"I asked your father for a whole month for consideration; but when I was here the other day at dinner, he seemed to think it rather a longer time than I ought to take, so I agreed to give my final answer when I came down from the country after Christmas—I shall go off on some lonely height and view the kingdoms of the earth."

Miss Langdon grew paler. The "kingdoms of the earth," just then, meant Mrs. Denbeigh. "If you do that you will never come back," she said, trying to laugh.

There was a definite tone of dismissal in her voice. Robinson raised his hat and pushed open the gate.

"Good-by," she said, passing in and closing it after her.

"And a merry Christmas!" said Robinson.

She looked at him over the low iron barrier. The snow-laden arch of the hedge framed her, with the snow-covered garden as a background. Her face, above the deep brown of her furs, was transparently pale, and her eyes were so blue as to shut out all consciousness on his part of anything but their color. "Ah, yes, a merry Christmas!" she repeated after him faintly.

"You are tired!" cried Robinson. "You are too tired! You must let me come to the house with you."

"Yes, I am too tired; but do not be concerned. I—I—shall have forgotten all about it by to-morrow."

She turned away. He watched her walk slowly down the path to the door; but many to-morrows would pass before he should have forgotten the blue of her eyes.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

ON Wednesday, when Robinson got off at the Durham station with Bennie Maxwell he found that Mrs. Denbeigh, Margaret, and Sylvia had come to meet them with D'Orsey and Tom Bent. Bennie had given a sigh of relief when he saw Margaret's smooth braids of hair making a yellow spot in the moving kaleidoscope of people on the platform. They had all brought snow-shoes, and when he and Robinson had put theirs on the whole party set out together, across the smooth meadows, to walk the mile and a quarter between the station and the farm.

The solemn hills, blue and tremendous, rose all about them, and Robinson drew in a great breath of the clean, dry air. He and Mrs. Denbeigh had started a few yards ahead of the others. "How did you manage to capture Bennie Maxwell?" she said. "I wonder Sylvia Langdon allowed him to come!"

"Bennie is his own master."

"Nevertheless, if Sylvia had chosen to use her boasted influence he wouldn't be here; her plans for Bennie by no means include a vacation in Durham with—" She stopped; D'Orsey had joined them.

"And what about this professorship, Robinson?" he asked genially.

"They have offered you the Bent, then?" said Mrs. Denbeigh. "How glad I am!"

"They have only offered me an associate professorship."

D'Orsey turned on him quickly, his head held sideways like that of an inquisitive robin. "Is that all, Robinson—quite all?"

His unnecessary emphasis annoyed Robinson. "What more should there be?" he answered shortly.

"Oh, nothing! certainly nothing—if you so desire it—yet there are professorships even better than the Bent."

"There may be dozens, but not in Great Dulwich, where the Board of Trustees seem quite as well aware of my lack of experience as I am myself."

"Robinson—this is really madness—you are not going to accept their offer. If you must stay in Great Dulwich, you can have the Bent, now, any time you want, provided you will only be a little stiff about it."

"I can't bargain in a matter of that kind."

"You are not a girl at a ball, too haughty to manœuvre for partners!"

"Manœuvring for anything is repugnant to me!"

"No manœuvring is needed, beyond a mere turn of the hand——"

"I shall not turn mine." Robinson stooped as if to adjust the thong of his snow-shoe. "Don't wait," he said to Mrs. Denbeigh, who hesitated a moment and then moved ahead, somewhat more rapidly than before. The fastening was obstinate, apparently, for Robinson went to the roadside and sat down upon a birch stump while he took off the snow-shoe and carefully examined it.

"Robinson?" D'Orsey's voice came back to him.

"Yes."

"Did you get your mail before you started this morning?"

"*No*!" It echoed from the rocky bank in front of him off to a neighboring barn; then, in repeated faint explosions, down the valley.

"I'm afraid I irritate Robinson," said D'Orsey.

There were so few people at the farm that Robinson found it impossible to see Mrs. Denbeigh alone again that evening; but the next morning Mr. Cogswell—having no other monopoly to amuse him—managed to take exclusive possession of D'Orsey, who—being too politic to desert so great a man—was left behind by the others when they went out in search of evergreens for the decoration of the house on the following day, which was Christmas.

Robinson and Mrs. Denbeigh, at first, were nowhere to be found.

"I saw Mr. Robinson go off up the hill, a few minutes after the mail came in," said Margaret. "I am afraid that there was something unpleasant in his letters."

"There he is now," said Tom Bent, pointing to a black figure moving in the steep pasture behind the house. "*O—Robinson*!" He made a horn with his hands and shouted through it.

Robinson turned, waved his hat, and went on again; but something had attracted his attention in the grove of pines that he had just left; he stopped, hesitated, and then slowly retraced his steps. The next moment Mrs. Denbeigh came out into the field. The others continued on their way without them.

She had come up to get some ground-pine, she said; it grew, in quantities, here on the hillside; so Robinson cut a branch of spruce and diligently swept away the snow; but the search proving vain, they went farther on into the woods, where, after some time had passed, they had better success. He helped her gravely, even distantly, and at last, when he had tied the green, wet garlands into bundles, he lifted them to his shoulder and started on the homeward trail.

"It is early yet," she said. "Can't we leave these vines, and climb to the top of the mountain?

There is something that I wanted to speak to you about. You heard from Coldston this morning? Mr. D'Orsey told me yesterday that you would."

"A letter was remailed from Great Dulwich. I hardly think that it will be necessary for us to discuss it."

"They have offered you the—the—professorship named for Mr. Denbeigh?"

"I beg you"—he spoke slowly and with great distinctness—"not to ask me to accept that position!"

She turned away and began to climb up the path to the mountain.

Robinson put down his wreaths and followed her. "So you have known from the beginning"—his voice was cold and resentful—"that this thing was to be offered me. It is probably through your influence——"

"It is not!" she cried. "If I had known, it never would have been offered you! Can't you believe that I had nothing to do with it—nothing?" She turned back and looked down at him.

"Was that what you wanted to speak to me about?" His whole face lighted.

"You shouldn't have made it necessary. Why couldn't you have more faith in me! I—I am the last person on earth to want you to take—that!"

"Forgive me!" He did not say anything more, but stood there, the sun shining down into his believing, hoping, incredulous eyes.

Her own fell. "Since—since you are not going to Coldston"—she moved on swiftly upward—"why not stay in Great Dulwich? You know you really can have the Bent if you care for it."

"So far as that goes, I regard the associate professorship as infinitely preferable; it leaves me——"

She interrupted him. "Have you no ambition?"

The words waked an echo in Robinson's ears. "I have—decided ambition," he said resentfully; "but if I take what they have already offered me it leaves me free, in a measure—but surely you understand! My place is outside, if you care for a name, for a reputation——"

"A name! A reputation!" Mrs. Denbeigh repeated bitterly. "What do they mean?"

"Much, if reality lies behind."

"And you insist that your place is outside—in the face of a didactic speech like that! Which reminds me to ask if you have talked with the Bishop about it?"

Robinson followed this new path humbly. "He got me over there—last Thursday—to see what I had for sale. I wish you could have heard us! If I had been a bigger man, I suppose I should have unfolded my pack and displayed all my goods; but, somehow, I resented its being examined."

"You couldn't expect the Bishop to go forward blindfold."

"Did I expect him to go forward at all? Moreover, he asked the most irrelevant questions. Of course I didn't mind his inquiring into my literary tastes and preferences, although he was apparently unprepared for the most of them."

"I am afraid you manufactured them on the spot."

Robinson laughed.

"But the associate professorship—have you really refused it?"

"No; I am——"

"Worrying it?"

"Yes; I suppose I shall finally be constrained by hunger to swallow it; but, in the meantime, I am growling at it and trying with all my might to shake the life out of it!"

"Why not bury it for a while?" she suggested.

"There is no knowing in what condition—" began Robinson.

She lifted her hand in protest. "The top of the mountain is just on the other side of this. Will you help me take off my snow-shoes?" she said.

A smooth sweep of rock rose beyond; it was a gentle slope, swept clear by the winds. Robinson knelt in front of her to loosen the thongs, and then, taking possession of her snow-shoes, he gave her his hand to help her across the bowlder. "See, there is some one there!" he said.

Above a ridge, a little ahead of them, the air was

quivering, as if with heat, and a slight smoke was rising. They pressed forward, and stood looking down. A shelter of boughs was built against the wall of the rock, and in front of this a fire of logs was burning, clear and hot. Just inside of the shelter some one was sitting; they could see an edge of blue skirt and a pair of heavy moccasins.

"The blue skirt is Sylvia's," said Mrs. Denbeigh speaking very clearly and judicially.

"The moccasins are the size of Bent's," said Robinson.

"The voice is the voice of Paula, but the gibe is Robinson's own," said Tom Bent.

"You had better come down and get warm," said Sylvia.

Robinson and Mrs. Denbeigh climbed down in front of the shelter. Bent rose, smiling, and gathering an armful of brush threw it on the fire. "Bennie and Margaret are around the corner," he said.

Mrs. Denbeigh stooped over the fire a moment, spreading out her hands to the blaze. Suddenly she blushed; Bent was watching her, and his inquiring expression was a little cruel. "You should see that view behind the rock," she said to Robinson.

"It isn't necessary for you to go yet," said Bent carelessly. "You are too warm with the climb to

think of trusting yourselves in that cold breeze, and, besides that, you are getting view enough where you are."

Mrs. Denbeigh sat down by the fire. One beyond another the great flanks of the hills swept into the valley and receded: blue, covered with hemlock; red, where the autumn fires had swept them and left but the bare trunks standing; purple, where the streaked white ghosts of the birches seemed to wander shivering in the cold; and far beyond them all, a range of shimmering mountains, steadfast, pure, and remote.

Robinson, too, was looking out at it, over her head, with a strange expression of recognition.

"It makes a man think of his first love," said Bent dreamily.

Robinson turned on him swiftly, with the look of one whose secret has been surprised. Mrs. Denbeigh, also, glanced at him reproachfully; but Bent was smiling to himself. He had been saying to Sylvia, only a moment before: "A man's best love is his first love—no matter if it is his second, or his third, or his twenty-third—his best love is always his first!"

Then from around the corner of the rocks came Bennie and Margaret. Bent began whistling softly to himself.

"I am glad you're here," said Bennie to Robinson and Mrs. Denbeigh; "it makes two more peo-

ple to tell—Margaret and I have decided to announce our engagement."

"You made up your minds quickly," said Bent. "I think you have not been behind those rocks more than five minutes."

"But it was decided yesterday."

"Yesterday?"

The two consulted each other's eyes. "When I got down out of the cars," said Bennie, "and saw Margaret——"

"He asked me if we should walk over together."

"And when we started off I said that it seemed —I thought we should be much wiser——"

"Bennie, you didn't! You said: 'Margaret, I'm sick of the way things have been going lately!' And I said: 'So am I.' "

"Idiots!" was Sylvia's comment. "If that was all that was needed, why couldn't you have said it weeks ago?"

Robinson smiled. Mrs. Denbeigh's eyes filled.

"See those cars!" said Bent, turning his back on them.

From far to the left, down in the valley sounded a low rumble. Like a toy, a tiny train of cars was winding its way slowly along the edge of the river, with infinitesimal, elvish tootings that came to them long after the steam of its miniature whistle had puffed into the air.

"We must go down now," said Bent; "we have barely time to get back by dinner. Shall I help you up, Paula?"

"There is time enough, if we are going through the woods," said Mrs. Denbeigh. "I am not rested yet."

"We have left all our greens at the foot of the pasture. Better come with us."

"Ours are on the other side, and I do not mean to start for a quarter of an hour," said Mrs. Denbeigh resolutely. "Mr. Robinson has not seen the view from the ledge." She rose and began to descend cautiously toward the edge of the cliff.

"Come, Sylvia!" Bent's tones had become suddenly sharp. He hurried Sylvia over the bare rocks—although carefully guiding every step—while Bennie and Margaret, with a nod of farewell, proceeded more leisurely behind them.

Robinson followed Mrs. Denbeigh around a corner of rock to a narrow shelf on the face of the mountain. In front of them rose a low protecting rampart of granite, upon which she leaned her elbows. "Sylvia Langdon will not be pleased," she said.

Robinson made no reply, and they stood in silence, looking out over the valley. "I wonder," he said, after a short time had passed, "if the 'kingdoms of the earth' looked so entrancingly

delicate and ethereal—so infinitely the better part—once, long ago, as they do this morning!"

"And who—am I?"

"You have not been showing me anything!" protested Robinson. "You are not in the vaguest way responsible for my thinking of the 'kingdoms of the earth.' I promised Miss Langdon to come up on some lonely height and view—the associate professorship."

"And are you viewing it?"

"No, I can't bring it before me. In its place I see this."

"Sylvia has excellent taste, in kingdoms," she said dryly.

"Sylvia has nothing to do with it!" he cried. "This is mine. I—if we must have a devil—show it to you. Will you look at it?" He lowered his voice. "It is yours for the taking."

She thought, her eyes on the mountains. "It should not be mine to take, nor yours to offer—it ought to belong—elsewhere——"

He opened his eyes wide in puzzled wonder. "Elsewhere?"

"Yes, but you might have it—for the asking."

"Then—I ask!" He caught her hands and looked down into her eyes. "I ask," he repeated softly.

"Not me! not me!"

"Who is there but you! What do you mean?"

"I do not know. It is a sort of justice—fair play—some one—some one—almost seems to stand between——"

"Hush!" A snowy arch of laurel hedge; a face, transparently white; and eyes, blue, intolerably blue, and wide with pain. Robinson let go of her hands and, stepping back a pace, took hold of a sapling that grew near. She saw that it trembled.

"Let us go back to the fire," she said.

He helped her to a seat on the boughs in front of the shelter, then, gathering an armful of brushwood, he threw it on the embers and came and took his place beside her. The flames rushed upward in a great blaze, and the two stretched out their shivering hands toward the heat.

"Listen," he said. "I have not heard. I refuse to be bound by this thing that you have imagined. It does not exist! I have asked you——"

"No, you have not asked me anything."

"Then I do so now. Will you give me that which you say may be mine?"

"But what have I to do with an ethereal, entrancingly delicate kingdom? My kingdom is full of color and warmth; full of action, yet secure, busy, and broad; it means influence, and power, and the opportunity to be something more in the world than a negligible quantity!"

"And have I any rightful part in it?"

"I do not know."

"Yes, you know."

"What makes a 'rightful' part?"

"Love—and only love!"

"How can I say? You have never told me——"

"You know that I love you."

"Then if love is all that is needed, you have a rightful part in the kingdom."

"Let us use plain language!" he said impatiently. "This talking in parables is puerile. Do you love me?"

"Ah, that is, indeed, plain language!"

"Do you love me as I do you?" he insisted.

"Must you have the truth?"

"The very truth."

"Then—I do not think that I love you as you love me—but I love you enough."

"How much is enough?"

"I cannot tell: love is such a deceit, such a snare!"

"If you loved me, you could tell."

"Have I never loved before?" she cried bitterly.

"But I must have more than that."

"How arrogant you are!"

Robinson's face set. He stared at the rushing flames until every twig consumed away, and the kingdom she had offered dissolved and flew into the icy air in dying sparks, and filmy wisps of smoke. "Enough, from you to me, is too little," he said.

She put her hands over her face and wept.

"You see?" His voice was unsteady. "You see?"

"But we should have been happy," she protested.

"You would not. I might have been happy, for a year and a day—if you had succeeded in deceiving me. But once I had come to know the truth, no man could have been more wretched. Why did you want to try it?"

She wiped her eyes and stuffed her handkerchief angrily in the pocket of her coat. "Because I am fond of you! I have grown very fond of you; I like to be with you; I am always glad when you are there—I like to see you with Annchen."

He drew his breath sharply. "And yet it is not love?"

The tears came blinding to her eyes again, and she searched impatiently for her handkerchief. "It might be love."

"Do you know that it ever will?"

Her face was hidden.

"Let us go down," he said, rising.

It was quick work coming down the mountain, and by the time they had reached their bundle of evergreens Robinson was in a whirl of emotion. She had said: "It might be love." That the encouragement was of the faintest made no difference. With a man's instinctive revulsion from pain, his heart sang, and the sweet warmth of the mere possibility shut out everything else in a sort of

intoxication. "Answer me!" he cried suddenly. "Will you marry me?"

"I dare not!"

"But this morning, when you came out to meet me——"

"Since then everything has grown doubtful."

"Yet you thought we should be happy."

"Where would our happiness be, if yours were to last but a year and a day?"

"If I had but the day," said Robinson, "I should be willing to risk the rest! I know that I can make you love me; promise to let me try!"

"No, no, I cannot, I must not! Wait, only wait!"

They had come to the edge of the woods; the roofs of the farm buildings, far below, showed as chimneyed hillocks at the foot of the pasture.

"How long must I wait?" said Robinson. "Until to-morrow?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"And until then, what may I think?"

"Nothing. Come."

They flew down the hillside with long sliding strides, as if driven by the wind, and the light dry snow curled away before them like powdered foam.

Late that afternoon D'Orsey solemnly and, perhaps a little enviously, took occasion to congratulate Robinson on the honor that Coldston had done

him, and was most pleasantly astonished when assured that the honor would be declined.

They were fastening up evergreen at the time this conversation took place, and D'Orsey, who had seemed depressed, stopped with the heavy wreath in his hand, his mouth half-open with amazement. "It is one of the most highly endowed professorships in the country! Robinson, you surely can't know that! The associate professorship they have offered you in Great Dulwich is nothing to it. Even the Bent, good as it is, is not much more than two-thirds the salary."

"Come," said Robinson, "this is to go over here." He led the dazed and uncomprehending D'Orsey across the room, and, climbing the step-ladder, prepared to hammer the long rope of green above the mantel-piece.

"You are sure you know what you are about, Robinson?" D'Orsey repeated anxiously.

"Quite." Robinson's utterance was impeded by a mouthful of tacks, and D'Orsey, not hearing, pulled the wreath gently to attract his attention. Robinson turned on him with a scowl and a mashed finger.

"I do not think you wholly take in the bearings of this, Robinson." D'Orsey's voice shook. "If you refuse the Denbeigh, I stand a chance. Judge Richings—your uncle—told me——"

Robinson took another tack from his mouth and

ran it through a loop in the wreath. "My uncle has written to me about that," he said, and turned to press the point of the tack into the wood-work.

"Robinson, you are sure you understand that I have flatly refused to allow my name to be used until yours is definitely withdrawn?"

There was no answer; again the wreath was gently pulled. Robinson laid down his hammer and freed his lips from tacks. "D'Orsey," he said, "are you absolutely certain that you would like to have that Denbeigh professorship offered you?"

"Quite. I have never felt at home in Great Dulwich. No Coldston man can!"

"Then," said Robinson, resuming his hammer, "don't make me mash my finger a second time."

There was a dance that night, and the next day was spent in Christmas festivities. Robinson, strangely enough, did not find the time long until the morning of the twenty-sixth. All his doubts and indecision had disappeared. Youth had flowed back in his veins, and, with youth, an overweening confidence in himself. He could plan Paula's life for her better than she could herself; he could make her happy, whether she loved him or not; he could make her love him, whether she thought she did or not; what was the fondness she had owned for him but love under another disguise?

And so, when the morning after Christmas came, he somewhat masterfully demanded the fulfilment

of her promise, and took her away with him for a walk across the meadows.

She was rather pale, as she swung along at his side on her snow-shoes; but she talked incessantly, nervously, gayly, until they had reached the river, which was a mile or so from the house.

Robinson grew more and more silent; he scarcely seemed to hear what she was saying. Suddenly he stood still. "You have been fencing me off ever since we left the house," he said. "Let me speak now. I cannot bear this suspense."

"I am listening."

"I had thought that my happiness, all day yesterday, was because I was sure of you; now I begin to see that to be still in doubt was joy enough to unsettle all my mind."

"And you are no longer in doubt?"

He made no answer.

She glanced at his face. The despairing pain of it struck her with remorse. "What can I say? What can I do?" Her voice was so low that he bent to hear her. "Among you, you have frightened me."

"Frightened you?"

"Bennie and Margaret are so tranquil, so serenely happy; even Tom Bent and Sylvia are sure; they do not question. We are not like them; we have too many uncertainties."

"I have none. Can you not trust me?"

She wrung her hands together.

It was unbearable to Robinson to see her so unlike herself. "Do you not love me, a little?" he murmured.

"Do not urge! I am so near loving you that I may consent. I have married once without love—see what it brought me to!"

Robinson wheeled about. "This is intolerable!" he said hoarsely. "Let us go back."

They had come almost to the farm-house before she spoke again. "Forgive me. I have not understood myself heretofore."

"Are you sure that you understand yourself now?"

"Miserably sure."

"Then I am the one to be forgiven," he said. "And if I slip away to-night or on the morning train—I told Mrs. Cogswell when I first came that I might go to-day or to-morrow——"

"Do not go this evening!" Her voice was like that of a hurt child.

He almost laughed at her. "To-morrow, then?"

"To-morrow is Sunday; there is no train."

"In that case, it must be to-night."

They had stopped to let a sleigh pass by them, but on seeing who they were, the driver drew up and fumbled in his pockets. "I've got a message for Mrs. Cogswell, and if you'd just as lief take it on up to the house, Mrs. Denbeigh, I'd be much

obliged. That down train'll be along in an hour, and when a man's telegraph-operator and station-master and freight agent all in one, he hasn't much time to waste. It seems to be from the Bishop," he added, in a friendly tone, as he handed her the folded paper. "I hope there ain't anything real serious wrong?"

They hurried into the house and found Mrs. Cogswell standing by the fire in the living-room. Her hands shook as she tore open the telegram. "I am always anxious about papa," she said, looking through it hastily. "Oh!" in tones of unconscious relief. "Poor Sylvia is ill! Papa has sent for me."

Mrs. Denbeigh's eyes suddenly sought Robinson's face and were withdrawn. "What are you going to do, Anna?" she asked.

"If I hurry I may be able to catch the next train down. The telegram says that Sarah is in bed, too. She had grippe, you know, when we came away; and, without Sarah, the household at the Deanery is lost. Yes—I suppose I must go."

"May I go with you, Mrs. Cogswell?" said Robinson. "I had intended leaving anyhow to-night."

"Of course it is not necessary," began Mrs. Cogswell; "still, I confess that I should be very glad to have you. I belong to the old *régime* and hate to travel alone. You are sure you were going

to-night?" She was moving up the stairway as she spoke.

"I had already told Mrs. Denbeigh," said Robinson, following her.

"Paula, I leave all these young people in your charge," Mrs. Cogswell called over the banisters.

"I will try and do my duty by them," Mrs. Denbeigh answered cheerfully. But when Robinson and Mrs. Cogswell had disappeared around the last landing, she turned and leaned her head against the mantel-piece. The dancing flames shone all blurred and wet through her tears.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

ROBINSON and Mrs. Cogswell settled themselves comfortably for their journey back to Great Dulwich. There had been, in the last month, a change in Mrs. Cogswell's manner toward him—something of intimacy. She had fallen into the habit of speaking of the world as if he and she looked at it together from some superior point of vantage. It had not struck him hitherto, but at the end of the first hour of the journey, when they had settled back into amicable silence, he began to reflect that there had been an immediate increase in his companion's friendliness. She was even confidential, recognizing him frankly as one of the few persons privileged to be admitted behind the Episcopal scenes. Robinson found himself growing hot at the thought of how the Bishop might regard her revelations.

Where is the use of a dignified reticence when there is always some member of one's family circle ready to reveal its inmost workings to the first sympathetic stranger that comes to hand?

But there was another view of Mrs. Cogswell's attitude that Robinson was not anxious to face.

To all appearances, at the first word of her illness, he had hurried to Sylvia Langdon's side, instinctively, unquestioningly. To all appearances? Had he not done so in reality? Was it not as if, between them, some old tie had asserted its existence and put out its strength automatically? He might love another woman; but had not his habit of mind, for years, made him Sylvia Langdon's?

He had woven a net out of his customary thought; how hard it was to break! And this old dream; how difficult to set aside its tyranny! His reason did not acknowledge the justice of any bond; he had been but dimly conscious that a bond existed, until, without his volition or consent, something had quietly claimed him; and, as once before, he had submitted to its constraint.

What did it matter? If Paula had loved him, nothing, not even honor—he believed—could have wrested him from her; but she had sent him away, effectually, finally. The barrier she had raised was insuperable, in that he would not even try to cross it!

As for Sylvia, Miss Langdon, the tie between them—if there was one—existed solely in his imagination. To thrust her thus upon him was one of those pieces of cruelty to which unmarried women are sometimes subjected. Even Paula had not been exempt from this—was it ill-breeding?

Paula! There had been no dreaming about

Paula; it had been all a reality, bitter-sweet; now it was over! What did anything matter?

Robinson woke from these long thoughts with a look of surprise to find that they were entering the station at Great Dulwich.

"There is my father," said Mrs. Cogswell, for the first time looking anxious. "He never comes to meet me!" She hurried along the platform, but the Bishop's eyes were fixed beyond her upon Robinson.

"Ah, Robinson," he said, "my dear, dear fellow, I did not mean to frighten you! We had really a very bad night last night, but Sylvia is better. The fever went down suddenly, and with it the delirium that so alarmed us; but"—turning to Mrs. Cogswell—"the household is completely disorganized, demoralized! I felt that a few hours of your assistance, Anna, were imperative. Have you any checks?"

"I have them, Bishop," said Robinson.

"Give them to Connor, here," said the Bishop; "and you might as well let him have your bag, with Mrs. Cogswell's."

"Thank you, I shall take the cars out, and my bag is not heavy."

"The cars? Why take the cars?" said the Bishop in a tone of surprise; and Robinson felt that he regarded his motion to go home by himself as something unaccountable.

They drove through the city and out toward the college, Robinson trying, in vain, not to be one of them. He looked through the carriage windows persistently at city buildings he had seen a hundred times, and he pretended an absorbing interest in the many small parks along the way; but the Bishop, in all he said, included Robinson carefully, as a person quite as much concerned as Mrs. Cogswell. To the Bishop there was but one hypothesis that could explain Robinson's presence; and this quick, frank coming at the news of Miss Langdon's illness had pleased and touched her father. He saw Robinson in a new light, and was even more cordial and friendly than was necessary, to make up for past injustices; although he was not quite able, as yet, to think, with proper calmness, of Robinson's opinion of Shakespeare.

"You are coming in for tea and something substantial," he said, putting a detaining hand on Robinson's arm when they got out of the carriage at the door of the Deanery.

Mrs. Cogswell had a moment of doubt. "Perhaps Mr. Robinson would prefer to go on to his own rooms," she suggested, while she made a horrified comment to herself as to the impropriety of really appropriating the man!

"But he has had no luncheon!" said the Bishop.

And Robinson, miserable through an intuitive perception of what might be going on in Mrs.

Cogswell's mind, hastened to accept the Bishop's invitation in order to reassure her.

"Is Miss Sylvia any better?" the Bishop asked of Josephine, who had let them in.

"Not much, sir," answered Josephine, opening wide eyes at Robinson. "She has been wanting you, sir."

The Bishop hurried upstairs. Miss Langdon was lying back in bed, flushed, and in that stage of fever between delirium and consciousness that seems so sensitive to every passing impression.

"Who is down there?" she said. "I hear Anna's voice, and—some one else."

"How sharp your ears are!" said the Bishop.

"She hears everything," murmured the nurse behind him.

"Who is with Anna? Who?" She raised herself on her elbow. "Who is it, papa?" she repeated. "Tell me!"

The nurse moved impatiently, and the Bishop began to be alarmed. "It is only Robinson, my dear! You know Robinson."

She sat up, supporting herself on her outstretched arm, and looked at him reproachfully, with eyes full of terror and misery. "You did not send for him?"

"There was no need to send, dear child; he came."

"He came?" she repeated stupidly; and then,

with more intelligence: "He came! Because I was ill? Was he anxious? Or has he come because his visit in Durham is over?"

Putting his arm around her shoulders the Bishop laid her gently back upon the pillows, and sat down by the bed, holding her hand in his; the nurse turned abruptly on Josephine, who was lingering at the door, and sent her away; then she left the room herself, shutting the door noiselessly behind her: nurses acquire large stores of tact.

"He came for you, Sylvia," said the Bishop simply; "and you must be calm and strong and self-controlled, and get well—for his sake—the poor fellow looked ten years older than when I last saw him."

Miss Langdon closed her eyes. For a while she was very still, then a faint smile came to her lips, and two tears stole out from under her eyelids.

## CHAPTER XXXV

MISS LANGDON was better the next morning. It was Sunday, and Robinson had gone to inquire for her after church. He had turned from the door, and was half-way down the steps of the porch when the Bishop called him.

"Sylvia has had a quiet night, very restful; and Sarah, too, is improving—she will probably be able to resume her tyranny in the course of three or four days." He smiled at Robinson affectionately as he made this unheard-of jest in regard to his domestic arrangements. "By the way," he added, "why didn't you tell me, the other evening you dined here, that those Coldston people had offered you their Denbeigh professorship?"

"I didn't hear from Coldston, Bishop, until after I went to Durham; but you must see," stammered Robinson, "that I couldn't have done that; it would have looked like a bid for the Bent—you wouldn't have done it yourself."

"Very true, very true! I do not think that, under the same circumstances, I should have mentioned it myself; but why don't you come in, my dear fellow? Come in and take dinner with us!"

"I can't, Bishop; whole hosts of stupid things

have piled up in my absence, and are clamoring for attention."

The Bishop nodded, opened his mouth as if to speak, hesitated a moment, and then went on. "Quite the same, I wish that I had had the knowledge of that offer from Coldston a little earlier. I am sure you will understand, Robinson, when I say that—since yesterday—I feel that I can no longer press your nomination to the Bent professorship—myself, at least." He came forward to the edge of the porch, with his hand outstretched.

For a moment Robinson did not understand; then he saw! Generously, even gladly, the old man had put aside his prejudices, and was accepting him as a member of his family.

"I am afraid I have always been a bit jealous of you," he continued, and there were tears in his eyes; "but Sylvia was all I had left, you know!"

There was something magnificent in the unquestioning family pride that would not allow the Bishop to doubt for a moment that Robinson had returned to Great Dulwich on his daughter's account. He had not had an instant's misgiving, and all Robinson's withdrawals and embarrassments were set down to becoming modesty and a proper sense of his unworthiness.

Robinson did not see Miss Langdon for several days, although he inquired for her many times. He heard that the party had come down from the

country; but, beyond his pilgrimages to the Deanery, he went nowhere.

One afternoon—it was the last day of the year—he came down from the Tower, shaking himself into the long rough coat which he used for stormy weather. There was a furious wind from the northwest, laden with huge flakes of wet snow that clung to all the branches of the trees and the walls of the houses. The snow-drifts between the Tower and the Deanery had blown across the path knee-deep, and Robinson buffeted his way through, holding his coat close to him with his hands thrust in the pockets. He rang the bell, and stood stamping the snow from his feet on the porch. Austere and uncompromising, Sarah appeared; the general softening toward Robinson had not reached her; she frowned unpleasantly as she delivered a message from Miss Langdon, who had come downstairs and wished to see him.

"I am wet," said Robinson, hesitating.

Sarah held the door open a very little wider. Robinson kicked some more snow from his shoes and came in. "I had better take your coat," she said grimly. "If you wear it into the drawing-room you'll give Miss Sylvia more cold."

Guiltily he handed her the coat, and turned to the drawing-room. Miss Langdon was half-reclining on a low lounge in front of the fire, which was blazing high in the chimney. She rose when Rob-

inson came in and stood with her hand on the back of a chair.

He hurried forward. "You ought not to have risen," he said, and, as she sank on to the lounge again, he stooped to arrange the long silk train of her gown, and spread over her the white rug which had dropped to the floor, giving also a skilful, effective touch to the pillows behind her before she leaned back upon them. She did not speak, but looked up at him with a faint quiver of the lip. Robinson's heart, smitten to a rush of gratitude and pity, recognized that here was some one who loved him, singly and sincerely; all his faults forgiven, his weaknesses forgot.

"So it was a merry Christmas?" she said with an effort. "Anna tells me that you were all gay to an unheard-of point."

"There was a dance, and a sleigh-ride on the river, and endless laughter and childish fun," said Robinson. "Your sister was the youngest there."

She sighed. "And Paula?"

"I think I should call her the leader of the revels."

Again she sighed. Even security—and she felt secure of Robinson's undivided allegiance—could not bring her immunity from the faint pang of jealousy that Paula's high spirits and power of enjoyment always caused her. Some lack of strength, some difference in vital temperament, cut her off

from the mere active pursuit of amusement. She did not covet any part in the pleasures of the people with whom she was most frequently associated, and yet to have no part hurt her, and sowed between herself and her friends innumerable intangible misunderstandings and infinitesimal causes of offence. "I am glad you enjoyed it," she said, trying to be cordial.

"Let us hope that another time you may enjoy it yourself."

"Sometimes, when they plan these things, I almost wish I might; but, after all, I never succeed. When I am with Louise Gates and Paula, I find myself putting away all my thoughts—as my mother used to do the fine china and bric-a-brac when she gave a little boys' party."

"Surely they have enough 'fine china' of their own to have learned how to respect yours!"

"I am not sure—mine is another variety."

"Have you ever let them see it?"

"I cannot; something comes between: perhaps it is the world—I never have been of the world. Perhaps the press of Paula's wider life ruffles the smooth current of my narrower one; but when I am with her I am constrained; it is an effort—not a pleasant one!"

"But surely," protested Robinson, "you do her injustice!"

She noted how easily he had dropped the plural;

she noted, too, how eagerly he spoke of Paula, and a feeling of desperation and faintness overcame her. She closed her eyes and leaned farther back upon the pillows, while her thoughts rang a tocsin in her ears: "*He is mine! He is mine! He is mine! She shall not steal him away! He is mine! He is mine! He is mine!*"

"You should not have allowed me to come in. You are ill; shall I send for some one?"

His voice sounded from a long way off, dulled by the clamor of her jangling nerves. She reached out her hand to him and felt him take it in both of his. "Don't ring," she murmured. "Don't call any one."

His fingers loosened, but she clung to him. Then he held her hand firmly.

"Wait," she whispered.

"I am waiting."

Then, like the slow swimming in of a tide, peace returned to her; she heard the fire crackle softly in the stillness, and opened her eyes. He was looking at her, grave and sorrowful. "If you will be so good as to ring," she said.

Robinson did not move. "When may I see you again?"

"To-morrow."

"At this same time?"

"Yes. If you ring twice it will bring the nurse—and not Sarah. I don't want Sarah."

Robinson took, even then, a distinct pleasure in the double pressure he gave the electric bell. The nurse came in with an anxious face, felt Miss Langdon's pulse surreptitiously, and sent him away with a smile on her face.

It was beginning to be twilight when he left the Deanery; it was still snowing, but the wind had fallen. He walked slowly, his head bent, his feet ploughing heavily through the drifts. As he came to where the path from the Bishop's turned in the direction of the Tower, he glanced up an avenue of elm-trees, bending together in a long archway of still, white plumes; at the end of it, the Caldwells' old cottage, buried in snow-tufted vines and shrubbery, caught his eye. Breaking his path, he plodded toward it and stood looking over the gate. The mullioned windows outlined with white on every casing, the snow drooping from the eaves like heavy drapery, the small balconies under the gables, cushioned with drifts, and the tall Norway spruces, loaded, every branch, with white, made the place look like an old-fashioned picture out of a drawing-book. Robinson gave a short, sharp sigh and turned back to his room.

The janitor had lighted a roaring fire that crackled and flamed up the chimney; all servants, save Sarah, were fond of Robinson. His lamp was burning, and the yellow flame reflected on the thin white of his muslin curtains turned them to rosy

lavender; through the undrawn shades he could see the soft tops of the snow-laden trees, pale blue in an atmosphere of deeper color: exquisite, yet intense. The whole interior seemed to Robinson quite the most beautiful thing he had ever known. He drew his chair back from the fire, where he could watch the blue outside, the lavender and gold of the curtains, and the orange lights that danced on the walls of the room. For a while he sat there, with the conscious content of a tired man who has reached home; but gradually he forgot the lights and the shadows, the peace of the room, and the beauty of the world. Leaning forward in his chair, his elbow on his knee, and his chin in his hand, his jaws slowly set until the knotted muscles stood out in bunches under his eyes and at the corners of his lips. His gaze was fixed, as if he saw something on the horizon. His teeth bit deep into his knuckle, and his feet were drawn back against the legs of his chair, as if he gripped them in his absorption. His face grew heavy, almost brutal, as if, in the absence of his soul, his body had reverted to the animal. The intensity of his determination to get at his duty, to compel himself to see his path straight, had no spiritual effect on the outer man; it brought out every line of strength, but it sacrificed every line of tenderness. Robinson, brooding there, was hideous, as struggle is hideous. He was fighting his battle, in the valley, at the roadside,

amid the dust and turmoil of a rebellious heart. The scars of the conflict went with him to his grave —in hard lines at the corners of the lips, in myriad wrinkles around the eyes, in a seamed forehead and a set jaw. For him there was no mount of transfiguration.

The fire died down, the snow whirled outside, somewhere near a clock struck. He got up, shivered a little, threw some sticks upon the fire, and went to work.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

THE next day, when he went to the Bishop's, Miss Langdon was not ready. Sarah came in and ostentatiously lighted the fire. Robinson did not notice her, and her opinion of him rose.

At last Miss Langdon came, her long silk gown trailing after her. She walked feebly, but she was alone. Robinson helped her to the lounge and drew the white rug over her, as he had done the day before. Then he stood a moment looking down at her; the deep thoughtfulness of his eyes brought the ever-ready color to her cheeks. Drawing his own chair near to hers, he took her hand in his. "Do you know what I have come for?" he said.

She smiled faintly.

"That I loved you long ago," he said, "you have always known. You were my dream, my far-off vision; but, in those days, I dared not so much as think that you might care for me a little—a very little—in return. Now—something tells me that it is different."

"It has always been different," she murmured.

He bent his head and raised her hand gently to his lips.

"I have always cared," she said, "and you have always cared"—he looked up at her quickly; her voice sounded so inexpressibly sad that he was surprised to find that she was not crying—"but we have not cared enough. We should have had courage. The lack of it has kept us apart. We might have been happy all these years! We are to blame."

"Not we, I—I am to blame! And yet, I lacked courage, then, through love of you. Dear, if it is possible that you still care enough—if you will take me now and forgive me all that I have done, and all that I have left undone——"

She pushed the wraps from her lap to the floor, and crossing slowly to the window, stood looking out at the park. Everything was sparkling, white clouds rolled by in the deep blue sky, and the shaddows of the trees showed like indigo on the snow. Robinson waited in front of the fire, until she turned and came back toward him, moving with great dignity and yet with a great surrender. "I can make you happy," she said, "I love you so well!"

He put his arm around her and drew her toward him, bent his head, and kissed her gently on the forehead. She closed her eyes; he felt all her light weight against him. Suddenly and helplessly she

sobbed; Robinson felt for his handkerchief and smilingly wiped her eyes.

"Don't!" he said; and she laughed back at him through her tears.

Then both of them started, for the Bishop was standing in the door. "May I wish you a happy new year?" he said.

"Wish us many," said Robinson.

The Bishop came forward. There was that in his daughter's face which caused the last shadow of his doubts to pass away. He was pleased, too, with Robinson's dignity and gravity, and touched at the smile he had seen in the man's eyes as he wiped away Sylvia's tears. And then, all at once, he looked at him inquiringly—for the Bishop never lost sight of details. "Why are you not at your lecture?" he demanded.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

THAT evening, after dining early at the Deanery, Robinson turned his steps toward the Gates place. There was something to be done, and he set about the doing of it with serene desperation. He was neither ashamed nor embarrassed at the position in which he found himself; but he was afraid—afraid of Paula's insight. At the entrance of the grounds he stopped a moment, to review the manner in which he should announce his news, and to assure himself that he had obliterated every trace of the flames which had gone to consume the offering he had placed upon Sylvia Langdon's altar. If it were possible, the altar itself should remain invisible; he would tolerate nothing that would suggest the idea of sacrifice.

The night was cold and clear, and when he started on his way again, the snow cried, querulous and resistant, under his feet. The house at the end of the avenue shone warm with yellow lights. It was so far removed from the road that Mrs. Denbeigh seldom had the curtains drawn, and as Robinson came nearer he could see the firelight flicker-

ing on the walls of the library. He rang the bell, and when the man told him that Mrs. Denbeigh was alone, he had a feeling of relief; but as he came forward toward her, something in his face startled her.

"What is it?" she almost whispered. "Is Sylvia worse? She has not died?"

"No, she is much better—I have come to tell you something else, and to ask you to wish me a happy new year."

"Wait a minute. Sit down."

Robinson went to his old place at the other side of the fire, and Paula seated herself as she had on the evening after Annchen's rescue from the river. "If Sylvia hadn't come in then," she thought.

"I have come to tell you," began Robinson.

"You need not," she said gently; "I know; you have become engaged to Sylvia. I hope you—" She stopped. Robinson was looking at her out of a face grown old and weary. "Oh, why did you do it?" she cried. "Why did you?"

Through some splendid effort of the will, the tired face changed; Robinson's half-bent figure straightened, his eyes brightened, and all the fatigue and heartache went out of his voice, as he asked, in tones that rang a little: "Are these your good wishes?"

Breathless, admiring, her eyes lingered on his and she did not speak; then a dull, heavy, aching

pain seemed to cramp her heart. The sudden torture made her cruel. "You will make Sylvia happy —for more than a year and a day!" she said.

"Thank you," said Robinson simply, "I shall try to." The manner of his announcement had been different from that which he had planned, and yet he was not dissatisfied. Paula had understood—but her insight had not hurt; her cruelty had even comforted.

"Is it a secret?" she asked, hearing the trot of horses' feet on the driveway. "Louise and Annchen are coming back."

"Not after to-night," said Robinson. "There are certain other friends, besides yourselves, whom —Sylvia wished to be told first. To-morrow there will be a general announcement. Mrs. Cogswell is to inform some town-crier at a tea she is giving over there. Of course Sylvia and I mean to keep out of it a little, as she is not strong, and—we want her to be well by Easter."

"By Easter?" She did not comprehend; but the pain at her heart—working on with a sort of savage automatism—became enlightening. "That is so wise," she said, with animation. "What are you going to do? Shall you carry her off to Europe?"

"Perhaps, for the summer."

"And you come back here in the autumn?"

"I have definitely accepted the associate professorship."

"They should have given you the other!" she answered quickly.

But Robinson shook his head.

"They will yet," she persisted cheerfully.

"I am not looking for it. I have accepted this in good faith."

"Oh, if you must indulge in luxuries!" She shrugged her shoulders; and all at once Robinson became aware that the supreme luxury of following the course of action which, to him, seemed best, might, in the face of future obligations, become difficult of attainment. He sighed and rose.

"Why not wait for Annchen and my sister?" said Mrs. Denbeigh. "I hear them at the door."

"I have still the Fanshawes and the Maxwells to see. Will you not tell Mrs. Gates and Annchen for me?" His face pleaded for him, and she gave him her hand in consent. He met the others in the hall, and in spite of Annchen's protests persisted in leaving.

Mrs. Gates went upstairs to her room; but Annchen, without taking off her wraps, walked into the library and confronted Mrs. Denbeigh. "What have you been doing to Robin, now?" she demanded.

"Nothing—he has been doing something to himself."

"Where has he gone? Why did he not stay?"

"He has gone to Mrs. Fanshawe's and to the Maxwells' to announce his engagement——"

Annchen advanced toward her with outstretched hands. "You dear!" she cried.

"—to Sylvia Langdon."

Arrested thus, Annchen stood, angry, dismayed, incredulous. "I don't believe it!"

"It is quite true—he asked me to tell you and your mother."

Annchen threw off her wraps, tossing a white cloak on one chair, and the lace that covered her head upon another. She and Mrs. Gates had been dining out, and her slender young arms and girlish neck were bare. She came forward to the fire and stretched out her hands to it, shivering. "How do you feel—you cruel woman?" she cried.

Mrs. Denbeigh did not answer for some moments, during which she studied Annchen's face thoughtfully. The child's surprising maturity and quickness of comprehension in some directions, combined with her immature ignorance in others, made bestowing confidences upon her something like calling them down an intelligent abyss. Her aunt turned away her head at last, sighed fitfully, and succumbed to temptation. "I am most unhappy," she said; "quite as unhappy as you would like to have me, if that will do you any good."

"Do you mean you are unhappy because he is going to marry Cousin Sylvia?"

"Yes."

"Then I shall tell him not to!"

"He would still do it, even if I told him myself; he knows it makes me unhappy."

"It is more than I can understand. I don't believe Cousin Sylvia was ill at all—it was one of her tricks!"

"Annchen, Annchen, you are saying impossible things!"

Annchen jumped up in her impatience, whirling her thin skirts dangerously near the fire. "Why are you deliberately giving him up to her?" she cried. "Is it because you think she cares for him, and that he knows, and believes that he must——"

Mrs. Denbeigh interrupted her. "Hush, we have no right to speculate about that!"

"But Robin is unhappy, frightfully unhappy!" The child's lip was quivering and she seemed on the point of tears.

"Still, if you and I had our way, Annchen, should we make him any happier?"

"But, Aunt Paula"— Annchen blushed crimson, and stammered—"he loves you, you, and not her at all!"

"What is love to him, so long as he feels that sacrifice will do quite as well? And as for me"—Mrs. Denbeigh's smile was a trifle bitter—"he told me in Durham that I could not make him happy."

"What made him say that?"

"I had told him that I was fond of him. I had even expressed my willingness to—marry him——"

"But had you let him see that you loved him?"

"Perhaps I did not quite see that myself."

"I am glad to think that you will see it!"

"That is rather cruel of you."

"I want to be cruel—you deserve it! You drove him away, you gave him no hope, and so, when Uncle Langdon and Cousin Anna annexed him——"

"I can't see how they could do that without his consent, you know."

"They wanted him, so they took him—the Langdon way: by right of eminent domain! And since you had broken his heart, to begin with, he didn't care what became of him."

Mrs. Denbeigh rose. "Oh, Annchen, be quiet, be quiet!" She began to walk restlessly about the room, moving a chair here and there, pushing a vase of flowers a little farther on the table, and putting out a light which was blazing too high near the door. "Good-night," she said at last, turning to Annchen. "Will you wait here and tell your mother about it?"

Annchen watched her as she crossed the hall and went slowly up the stairs. "She is miserable," she said to herself vindictively, "quite miserable, and I am glad of it!"

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

ALTHOUGH he knew that no engagement of marriage, however unexpected, could be permitted to take Great Dulwich by surprise, Robinson was but ill-prepared for the extent to which his own had been regarded as a foregone conclusion, and he emerged next day from the delighted enthusiasm of Sylvia Langdon's too prescient friends with a feeling of dazed self-congratulation, like a man who has weathered unknown dangers in the dark.

Miss Langdon's recovery was slow, and for the next few months Robinson was left to bear the brunt of a burst of Great Dulwich hospitality alone. The early misfortune of his birth in Coldston was forgiven, if not forgotten; and all the inner sacred circle—although vaguely puzzled at his entire unconsciousness of their former neglect—received him with acclaim. The Bishop, from the very first, had brushed aside his own prejudices with characteristic generosity and a high hand. A long life, exempt from the aggressions of people who make a business of pointing out inconsistencies, left him feeling

quite at liberty to recognize in his future son-in-law innumerable good qualities which, in Robinson, had not been so apparent. The Bishop and Mr. Cogswell were fully agreed upon one subject only: they both hated an autocrat—they frequently said so—but in Robinson the Bishop saw possibilities of friendship, and he did not mean to be balked of his opportunity by any spectre of conformity.

And yet Robinson himself had never known such loneliness!

In giving up Paula he had not foreseen that, to be effectual, such renunciations must be merciless and entire. Yet, little by little, his honest purpose drove him to banish relentlessly much that, once, he had hoped to retain to charm his solitude; and his roving mind, his vagrant thought, his care-free comment and soaring imagination were no longer permitted to enter, uninvited, and lure him irresponsibly forth. All through the later winter he was conscious of the twitch of unaccustomed bonds, and, silken though they were, he found them sadly awkward, and himself only too prone to become entangled.

At last, when the buds had swelled and burst once more upon the oaks in the college park, and the river, long freed from its coat of ice, curved like a sparkling ribbon about the green and pink haze of the young foliage on the Gates place, Robinson was able to look forth from the height of the

Tower calmly. There was mist on the mountains and sunlight on the far-off sea; scents of spring were brought to him on the warm sweet breeze; birds carolled out, rapturously sudden, from the tops of the elm-trees; he saw and felt and heard with quiet pleasure, for the old, restless soul of these things had been barred outside the door of his heart along with youth and Paula Denbeigh.

It was the morning of his wedding-day. Up from the park, not far from the foot of the Tower, came the energetic rattle and long slow swish of the carpenter's hammer and plane, and the gay whistle of the ever-cheerful painter. Robinson, leaning over the stone balustrade, could see the tiny cottage, far below, all its diamond-paned casements flung wide open to the sun and wind. The little house was to be ready for him and his wife when they came home in the autumn, and the last directions had been left with the Bishop and Mrs. Cogswell.

Robinson and Miss Langdon had made their final tour of inspection the evening before; rustling from room to room through heaps of shavings and strips of paper, and occasionally barely missing some lurking pail of paste.

"Why do you smile?" she had asked.

"I was thinking of the people who have lived here."

"Of the Caldwells?" She looked back in astonishment.

"Not of the Caldwells in particular; still, they come in with the rest: with the men who have thought and worked in the sight of these old study walls; with the women who have toiled and sacrificed; with the young people who have heard the doors close behind them as they went out into life, and the little children who have come into the world——"

She moved forward so suddenly that Robinson had put out a saving hand to prevent her stumbling over a half-hidden board that lay along the floor. "It is an interesting old house," she murmured; "quite the oldest in the park. But, then, the college has never been able to spend much on improvements, and the professors themselves have always had so little money——"

"But isn't that the root of its attraction?—something that neither money nor scrupulous improvements can procure? Surely you feel it!" he said eagerly.

She shook her head doubtfully, and went through the door of the next room. "I do not know. What is 'it'?" Her eyes did not meet his; she was looking critically up and down, from the freshly papered walls to the newly tinted ceiling.

"The consecration of all those generations of refinement and poverty. Nothing can do away with

it: dismantled, misused, deserted, uncared for, the little place is still fragrant with the incense of it."

"The incense of poverty is sweeter in the nostrils of man than in those of woman. I think that if you consulted a few of the wives of by-gone scholars, you would find that they stood too near the censer to find it agreeable!"

Robinson laughed, and then grew grave. "Sylvia, you haven't consented to live in this house merely to satisfy an ancient dream of mine?" he said, taking her hands in his.

She looked down at their clasped hands and did not answer for a moment.

"Sylvia?" he repeated.

"Are you the only dreamer?" she asked. "There is not a room in this house that I have not furnished. I took down those hateful shelves over there in the corner of the drawing-room ten years ago; all the old open fireplaces were restored, and the north chamber was papered with yellow at the time of your graduation; and I put in these hardwood floors when the Caldwells moved out—about ten months ago."

"Yet these seem to have been done within the last few weeks. And when did you make up your mind to that old-fashioned landscape paper we selected for the hall yesterday afternoon?"

"I absolutely refuse to tell."

"When?" He stooped and looked into her eyes.

"Last Christmas vacation, the day after you went up to the farm at Durham."

"You were over here in that weather!"

"I came to say good-by."

"That is where you caught cold; had you no idea of the imprudence of stopping in a damp house in December?"

"I had a very clear idea of the imprudence of it; but—I did not care."

"Don't say that!" He lifted her left hand and slowly drew off, first, her glove, and then her engagement ring. Keeping her hand still in one of his, he fumbled in his vest-pocket with the other, and bringing out a small white box, took from it a plain gold ring. "I want to see if this fits," he said.

"Let me put it on myself!"

"No one shall ever put it on but me," he answered, pressing the ring upon her finger and holding it in place. "When you wear this you will no longer have a right not to care." He drew the ring off again, as he was speaking, and returned it to the box.

"But it is different now! Then I did not understand; I had given you up, so I took the key for the last time——"

"I wonder they let you have it!"

She had laughed and looked confused. "Listen," she said, putting her hands upon his shoul-

ders; "I have always had a key of my own! Do you remember the time, not long before you graduated, when five or six of us went over the cottage together? It had been left unlocked by the workmen. I took the key home with me then; there are always two or three latch-keys to these college buildings—nobody ever missed it."

He had bent his head and kissed her hands, and they had left the house together. "Whose key is this?" he had asked as he had locked the door.

"Mine," she had said; "no, yours!" and he had brought it away with him to the Tower as something precious.

The key was in his vest-pocket now, along with his wedding-ring. He smiled as he felt them both, for safety, with his thumb and forefinger; and if there was sadness in the smile, it was of that quiet kind, habitual to middle-age: a sadness not incompatible with an active, wholesome, unaffected enjoyment of life.

And so he took his last look about, closed and bolted the trap-door, and shut up his rooms. Meeting D'Orsey, his best man, at the foot of the stairs, the two walked up through the park together to the church.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

WHEN Robinson came in at the vestry door and stood at the chancel rail, Paula Denbeigh was sitting with Annchen among the relatives in the front seats. She had planned to go abroad earlier in the spring, but, from time to time, the day of her sailing had been deferred. She gave out openly, gayly, indeed, that she was waiting for Sylvia Langdon's marriage.

The wedding ceremony itself had become a final, secret test; Paula wanted to be assured that she could hear, with equanimity, those last, solemn words which should cut off Robinson, irrevocably, from herself. She knew that it would hurt; but she did not know how much—she felt it necessary, once for all, to arrive at the truth.

The music began. There was a flutter and rustle of turning heads; the ushers, headed by Harry Cogswell and Tom Bent, came marching up the aisle, each clean-shaven young face sternly set, as if in noble disapproval; following them, at a distance, were two quaint little Cogswell girls, almost lost in their enormous bouquets; then came

Miss Langdon, alone. She was so white, so ethereal, so transfigured with happiness that Paula turned quickly away, and so caught the sudden, wonderful softening of Robinson's face as he came forward a few steps to meet the bride at the edge of the chancel dais.

After that Paula heard nothing but indistinct and time-worn phrases, grown meaningless with use.

The last words were spoken. Robinson and his wife had gone out of the church together, and had driven swiftly to the Deanery. The long bright procession of guests followed, walking across the grass, Paula among them, saying witty things that came to her, she knew not how, and succeeding in amusing, she knew not why. Once in the house, she had gone slowly up the drawing-room with the crowd; she had kissed Sylvia affectionately, and had given Robinson her hand, all self-possession. The ready words of congratulation were tripping on her lips—then the smile had frozen on her face, the well-prepared words would not come, she had said nothing and had gone on.

Robinson turned to speak to Annchen, who was close behind with Harry. Paula looked back at him, and he nodded at her in cordial good-fellowship; for him nothing had happened; or was it only a part of that splendid control by which this new inscrutable Robinson was enabled to shut the door in her face?

She did not know how time was passing until, through an opening in the throng that surrounded her, she saw Robinson standing at the foot of the stairs alone. He had changed his clothes and seemed to be waiting; his eyes were fixed on a great bunch of spring flowers, delicate, charming things that made her think of Sylvia. The same thought seemed to strike Robinson also, for he drew a handful of narcissus and frisia from the vase and handed them to his wife, who was coming down the stairs. After that the guests all surged out to bid them good-by, and they drove away together.

It had been like a bad, bad dream—but she had found out what she had wanted to know!

Later, as they drove homeward in the carriage, Annchen seemed to have set her mind steadily to tears. Deliberately and uninterruptedly she cried, from the moment they left the Deanery until Mrs. Denbeigh signalled to the driver to stop at the path that led to the river. "I am not going up to the house just yet," she said.

"Where are you going?"

"To the boat-house."

"Can't I come with you?"

"If you like." Mrs. Denbeigh's voice was listlessly forbidding.

"It doesn't sound as if you liked," said Annchen, getting out, nevertheless.

"I don't," said her aunt; "I want to be alone."

Annchen's sodden handkerchief was returned to her eyes, and her grief grew audibly demonstrative.

"What is it now?" said Paula, as they walked together under the trees. "Have you been quarrelling with Harry again?"

"We are done with each other forever!"

"And what was it about, this time?"

"It was about Robin."

"Couldn't you find something new to quarrel over?" asked her aunt, a little wearily.

"I couldn't find anything better!"

"And what did you say?"

"I told Harry what I thought of them."

"Of whom?"

"Of his whole family, and the way they have carried off Robin from those who have a better right to him."

Paula caught Annchen by the arm, and hurried her toward the boat-house. Going in, she closed the door, and then, turning so suddenly that all her draperies swirled about her: "What have you been saying to Harry?" she demanded.

"Did you imagine that I had said anything of you?" Annchen gasped. "Of course I hadn't! Harry thinks that I am jealous on my own account. He called me a dog in the manger. And I said dreadful things—but they were all true! It drove me frantic to see Robin looking so almost holy at that horrid ceremony, and Cousin Sylvia—she was

like the photograph that Bennie and I printed last autumn. Her face had the happiness of an angel!"

"I saw."

"Then you ought to know how I feel."

"Does the sight of other people's happiness make you wretched?"

"That kind of happiness makes me desperate! It ought to make any one desperate to find out that one can give up everything; can throw away happiness with both hands, and go about doing some duty that gnaws one's heart in two, and then—get a kind of unnatural exalted pleasure out of it! There should only be one way of being happy! —Oh, this has been a wretched day!"

"You and Harry will make it up."

"I don't wish to make it up with him, ever! I suddenly found myself tired of Harry to-day; oh, tired! He seemed so dull, so inadequate, so— Cogswelly! I wouldn't marry him for the world!"

"Then why all this misery?"

"Because I am tired! Because Harry is dull and stupid and heavy-witted, and because I shouldn't care if I never saw him again! And if I am going to be the kind of person who changes in this disgusting manner, it would be far better that I should die, now, before I have become thoroughly degraded." And Annchen pulled out her handkerchief and began crying again.

With a gesture of discouragement, Paula turned

away, and went out upon the balcony of the boat-house. The river was very blue and quiet; the tide was in, and the rapids only gurgled softly. She stood watching them, not thinking very much, but suffering dully. She glanced across the water toward the park; the leaves of a tall maple had grown so thick that, from where she stood, the Tower was completely hidden from view. If she had gone to the other end of the balcony she could have seen it clearly; but she did not move. The Tower was an empty symbol pointing to an unresponsive sky.

THE END

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